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HISTORICAL NARRATIVES AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY ON A EUROPEAN PERIPHERY

Early History Writing in Northern, East-Central,
and Eastern Europe (c. 1070–1200)

Edited by

Ildar H. Garipzanov



BREPOLS

Historical narratives and Christian identity on a European periphery : early history writing in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe (c. 1070–1200). – (Medieval texts and cultures of Northern Europe ; v. 26) 1. Historiography – Scandinavia – History – To 1500. 2. Historiography – Europe, Eastern – History – To 1500. 3. Historiography – Europe, Central – History – To 1500. 4. Christianity and literature – Scandinavia – History – To 1500. 5. Christianity and literature – Europe, Eastern – History – To 1500. 6. Christianity and literature – Europe, Central – History – To 1500. 7. Identification (Religion) – History – To 1500. 8. Christian literature, Latin (Medieval and modern) – Europe – History and criticism. 9. Literature and history – Europe – History – To 1500.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Adam, <i>Gesta</i>	Adam of Bremen, <i>Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum</i> , ed. by Bernhard Schmeidler, MGH SRG, 2 (Hannover: Hahn, 1917).
Aggesen, <i>Brevis historia</i>	Sven Aggesen, <i>Brevis historia regum Dacie</i> , ed. by Martin Clarentius Gertz, in <i>SMHD</i> , I, 94–141.
<i>Ágrip</i>	<i>Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum: A Twelfth-Century Synoptic History of the Kings of Norway</i> , ed. and trans. by Matthew J. Driscoll (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1995).
Ailnoth, <i>Gesta</i>	Ailnoth, <i>Gesta Swenomagni regis et filiorum eius et passio gloriosissimi Canuti regis et martyris</i> , in <i>Vitae sanctorum Danorum</i> , ed. by Martin Clarentius Gertz (Copenhagen: Gad, 1908–12), pp. 77–136.
<i>Christianization</i>	<i>Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900–1200</i> , ed. by Nora Berend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
<i>Chronicon Roskildense</i>	<i>Chronicon Roskildense</i> , ed. by Martin Clarentius Gertz, in <i>SMHD</i> , I, 14–33.
Cosmas, <i>Chronica</i>	<i>Die Chronik der Böhmen von Cosmas von Prag</i> , ed. by Bertold Bretholz and W. Weinberger, MGH SRG ns, 2 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1923; repr. Munich: MGH, 1980).

<i>DD</i>	<i>Diplomatarium Danicum</i> , 4th series (Copenhagen, 1938–2002).
<i>Gallus, Cronicae</i>	<i>Galli Anonymi Cronicae et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum</i> , ed. by Karol Maleczyński, Monumenta Poloniae Historica n. s., 2 (Cracow: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1952).
<i>Gesta Hungarorum</i>	<i>Die Gesta Hungarorum des anonymen Notars: Die älteste Darstellung der ungarischen Geschichte</i> , ed. by Gabriel Silagi (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1991).
<i>GPP</i>	<i>Gesta principum Polonorum: The Deeds of the Princes of the Poles</i> , ed. and trans. by Paul W. Knoll and Frank Schaer, Central European Medieval Texts, 3 (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003).
<i>Historia Norwegie</i>	<i>Historia Norwegie</i> , ed. by Inger Ekrem and Lars Boje Mortensen, trans. by Peter Fisher (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2003).
<i>Hungrvaka</i>	<i>Biskupa sögur</i> , II, ed. by Ásdís Egilsdóttir, Íslenzk fornrit, 16 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2002), pp. 1–43.
<i>Íslendingabók</i>	<i>Íslendingabók</i> , ed. by Jakob Benediktsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 1. 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1968), pp. 3–28.
<i>Making of Christian Myths</i>	<i>The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c. 1000–1300)</i> , ed. by Lars Boje Mortensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2006).
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
MGH AA	Auctores antiquissimi
MGH SRG	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum
MGH SRG ns	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, nova series
MGH SS	Scriptores (in folio)

- PSRL* *Polnoje sobranije russkikh letopisej*, 44 vols to date (St Petersburg, Leningrad, and Moscow: Akademija Nauk SSSR; Moscow: Jazyki slavianskoj kul'tury, 1908–).
- PVL* *The Povest' vremennykh let: An Interlinear Collation*, comp. and ed. by Donald Ostrowski, 3 vols, Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature, 10 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2003).
- SMHD* *Scriptores minores historiae Danicae medii ævi*, ed. by Martin Clarentius Gertz, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Gad, 1917–22; repr. Copenhagen: Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til Dansk Historie, 1970).
- SRH* *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum tempore ducum regumque stirpis Arpadianae gestarum*, ed. by Emericus Szentpétery, 2 vols (Budapest: Regia Universitas, 1937–38).
- Theodoricus, *Historia* Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia de antiquitate regum norwagiensium*, in *Monumenta Historica Norvegiae: Latinske kildeskrifter til Norges historie i middelalderen*, ed. by Gustav Storm (Kristiania: Brøgger, 1880; repr. Oslo: Aas & Wahl, 1973), pp. 1–68.

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HISTORY WRITING AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY ON A EUROPEAN PERIPHERY

Ildar H. Garipzanov

The Northern, East-Central, and Eastern European realms officially converted to Christianity during the tenth and early eleventh centuries; in practice this meant the conversion of kings, princes, and other leading figures. Christian identity, affiliated in these early stages with the powerful, became a social category that structured the recently converted societies along new lines of division and collaboration. In this early period of Christianization, many people may have sought conversion, and hence a new form of religious identification, because of religion's role in interpersonal social networks: the hubs of Christian networks — such as the residential halls of kings and the high aristocracy, episcopal centres, and monasteries — were also the centres of social power. Being linked to high social status and political power, Christian networks fostered in-group commitment and provided a strong degree of support for this new religious identity in society at large.

For people — both clergy and lay elite — involved in these networks, Christian rituals and written and liturgical discourses were directed towards defining and redefining in-group Christian identification and its juxtaposition with out-groups such as pagans, Jews, or deviant Christians. The first Christian historical texts produced in these countries played an important role in this process of identity formation, although the narrative strategies they employed often varied considerably. Many of those early works tended to construct a dichotomy of Christians versus Others, depicting the latter in negative terms; thus, reading audiences would associate themselves with a positively described Christian identity and reaffirm such self-identification. Some early Christian narratives written on the north-eastern periphery of medieval Europe presented this dichotomy as divided by space

or time — the glorious Christian present replacing the ignominious heathen past. Another strategy was to relegate the ‘pagan’ period to a level of no historical importance or to omit it altogether and focus on the converting efforts of the first Christian rulers and the time thereafter. Some narratives defined Christian identity in institutional or national terms and relegated hostile neighbours, ‘bad’ Christians, or Jews to the role of the Others. But even those authors who presented a particular ‘nation’ as the driving force of their narratives described them, first and foremost, as Christian ‘nations’.¹ Furthermore, many early Christian narrators wrote their works close to the centres of political power as loyal servants of ruling dynasties, and dynastic loyalty led some writers to take a more positive view of a particular dynasty’s pagan past. Still, such narratives emphasized the Christian nature of ruling dynasties and their proximity to the Lord. Albeit diverse in their narrative strategies, the early historical works from the north-eastern periphery of Christian Europe can be studied together as typologically similar texts: regardless of the languages used, their clerical authors were writing local pasts into the established Christian master-narrative and presenting their regions, ‘nations’, and ruling dynasties as immanent elements of the City of God.

The surviving early historical narratives in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe were composed during the twelfth century, usually a century or more after the official conversions. The official conversion of Denmark took place in the mid-tenth century, and the earliest Danish historical narratives, Ailnoth’s text on King Swenomagnus and St Canute (*c.* 1110–20) and the *Chronicle of Roskilde* (*c.* 1138), were written more than a century and a half later. The same time span divides the earliest Christian historical texts in Norway — the *Historia Norwegie*, *Ágrip*, and the history by Theodoricus Monachus — from the Christianizing efforts of Olav Tryggvason (995–1000) and St Olav (1015–30). Although *Íslendingabók* was written earlier (between 1122 and 1133) than these Norwegian narratives, it appeared more than a century after the Icelanders officially accepted Christianity in the year 999/1000. The chronicles of Gallus Anonymus and the *Primary Chronicle* appeared in the 1110s, more than a century after the official conversion, correspondingly, in Poland (in the last third of the tenth century) and early Rus’ (988). The chronicle of Cosmas of Prague was written *c.* 1119–25, more than two centuries after Bohemia was converted. Thus, these historical narratives were written many generations after the conversions, when actual memories of these acts had already become blurred and elusive. These narratives therefore reflected and

¹ Cf. Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der ‘nationes’: Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellung im Mittelalter*, Münstersche Historische Forschung, 8 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995).

actively reshaped the remembrance of the distant past within twelfth-century audiences, and this dynamic process of the reconfiguration of the past was conditioned by various twelfth-century historical contexts and concomitant literary culture.²

The Christian historical narratives selected for this volume can also be viewed as typologically different from the second wave of history writing in these lands. In the second stage, historical writers such as Saxo Grammaticus in Denmark, Wincenty Kadłubek in Poland, and Snorri Sturluson in Iceland developed a different attitude towards the pre-Christian past, tending to exonerate its non-Christian features, and thus incorporated glorious pagan times into their texts in a romantic style similar to that of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Lars Boje Mortensen has suggested that this historiographic change took place in Hungary around 1200, in Denmark *c.* 1170, and in Norway in the early thirteenth century, which suggests the year 1200 as an approximate dividing line for such a change in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe.³ Of course, this literary shift could occur in a particular country of the north-eastern periphery slightly earlier or later, depending on the time of initial conversion and hence the degree to which a local society and its written culture was affected by Christianization and historical traditions from the core regions of Christian Europe. The discussion of some narratives in this volume — such as those by Cosmas of Prague, the Hungarian Anonymous Notary, and Sven Aggesen — demonstrates this variation quite clearly.

The contributions to this volume, whilst discussing these constructions of social memory and processes of remembrance, address how classical and biblical models, historical narratives from the central regions of medieval Europe, and earlier hagiographic works informed the composition and structure of the texts themselves. Such an approach allows for a better picture of how early Christian historical discourse was transmitted across the north-eastern periphery of medieval Europe and how the literary cultures of neighbouring Christian centres influenced that process.

This approach also allows us to overcome established divisions in the treatment of the early historical narratives written in these three regions. These early narratives have been traditionally studied separately within different historiographic traditions. Early Scandinavian historical texts have been studied in connection

² On the interplay between the text and social context, see especially Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), especially chaps 1 and 6 (pp. 3–28 and 99–110).

³ Lars Boje Mortensen, 'Sanctified Beginnings and Mythopoietic Moments: The First Wave of Writing on the Past in Norway, Denmark, and Hungary, *c.* 1000–1230', in *Making of Christian Myths*, pp. 247–73 (pp. 259–60).

with the historical discourse of Western Europe, as have the early narratives in East-Central Europe. By contrast, the early historical texts in early Rus' have been mainly analysed within the framework of Byzantine and Slavonic literary cultures.

Furthermore, scholarly works on early history writing in those regions have been shaped by different methodological premises. Recent studies of early historical narratives in early Scandinavia and East-Central Europe demonstrate a clear awareness of new concepts developed by literary scholars. An illustrative example of this new trend is the collective volume *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom*, edited by Lars Boje Mortensen, which approaches early Scandinavian and East-Central European historical and hagiographic works as literary foundational stories (hence myths) for early Christian kingdoms in those regions.⁴ Methodological developments of this kind have had less of an effect on Eastern European works which discuss early history writing in Kievan Rus'; most of these are still shaped by the traditional tenets of Russian 'textology'⁵ and have been based on the assumption that extensive historical narratives appeared suddenly soon after the conversion of Kievan Rus' (988). Scholars working within this tradition thus have spent much energy reconstructing hypothetical historical works of the eleventh century and have been less inclined towards a literary analysis of the earliest surviving historical texts composed in the early twelfth century. Hence, a comparative study applying similar methodological approaches to the beginnings of history writing in Kievan Rus', East-Central Europe, and Scandinavia may help to overcome existing historiographic discrepancies.

Finally, following the works of Hayden White, the interplay between narrativity and history writing and the nature of the historical narrative have become topics much discussed in historiographical studies, even though his insistence that a text requires a moralizing framework and closure in order to count as 'narrative' has been rejected by most scholars working with medieval historical texts.⁶

⁴ For a strong appeal to study medieval hagiographic and historical texts as basically the same kind of narratives — at least prior to the twelfth century — see Felice Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre: "Hagiographical Texts" as Historical Narrative', *Viator*, 25 (1994), 95–113.

⁵ For more details, see Donald Ostrowski, 'Introduction', in *PVL*, I, pp. xvii–lxxiii (pp. xlv–liii).

⁶ Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', *Critical Inquiry*, 7. 1 (1980), 5–27; Louis O. Mink, 'Everyman his or her Own Annalist', *Critical Inquiry*, 7. 4 (1981), 777–83; Marilyn Robinson Waldman, '"The Otherwise Unnoteworthy Year 711": A Reply to Hayden White', *Critical Inquiry*, 7. 4 (1981), 784–92; Hayden White, 'The Narrativization of Real Events', *Critical Inquiry*, 7. 4 (1981), 793–98; Roger Chartier, 'Four Questions for Hayden White', in *On the Edge of the Cliff*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Baltimore: John Hopkins

Furthermore, textual scholars have also rejected White's distinction between proper historical narratives and 'less developed' historical forms like annals and chronicles; as Sarah Foot puts it, 'if sets of annals are read entire [...], they convey significant narratives'.⁷ White's concept of narrative was further questioned in the recent volume *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*, edited by Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretti.⁸ Also, interestingly, the editors and contributors to that volume deal with a much wider range of texts — not only with saints' lives, but also with charters and poetic works⁹ — than one might expect if following the classic works on medieval historiography, such as R. W. Southern's essays on 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing'.¹⁰ Yet such a broader scope allows some of the volume's authors to look at the nature of narrativity within a broader written–oral continuum.

The present volume follows a more traditional distinction between the forms of historical narrative: it limits itself to histories, chronicles, and annals¹¹ (and in some cases relevant hagiographic works).¹² What makes it less conventional is a

University Press, 1996), pp. 28–38 and 169–70; Hayden White, 'A Response to Professor Chartier's Four Questions', *Storia della Storiografia*, 27 (1995), 63–70; and Nancy Partner, 'Hayden White: The Form of the Content', *History and Theory*, 37 (1998), 162–72.

⁷ Sarah Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of the Form: Narratives in Annals and Chronicles', in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. by Nancy Partner (London: Hodder, 2005), pp. 88–108 (p. 102).

⁸ *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*, ed. by Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretti, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 16 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006).

⁹ See especially contributions by Ross Balzaretti and Sarah Foot on charters, Catherine Cubitt on oral stories, and Elizabeth Tyler and Judith Jesch on poetry.

¹⁰ *History and Historians: Selected Papers of R. W. Southern*, ed. by Robert J. Bartlett (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 11–83.

¹¹ The question whether a meaningful distinction between annals and chronicles can be made is less important for the present volume. On the problematic nature of such a distinction, see David Dumville, 'What Is a Chronicle?', in *The Medieval Chronicle II: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle, Driebergen/Utrecht 16–21 July 1999*, ed. by Erik Kooper, Costerus New Series, 144 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 1–27.

¹² Many contributions in *Making of Christian Myths* emphasize the importance of the earliest hagiographic narratives for early history writing on the north-eastern periphery of Latin Christendom. This volume does not question this point, and its chapters shall be viewed in close relation with the above-mentioned collection and a more focused discussion of some relevant early hagiographic works in *Saints and their Lives on the Periphery: Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (c. 1000–1200)*, ed. by Haki Antonsson and Ildar H. Garipzanov, Cursor Mundi, 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

choice of textual evidence less familiar to English-speaking academia. This volume presents the first comprehensive overview of the main historical narratives created in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe in the twelfth century, with each chapter providing a concise introduction to the narrative in question. At the same time, the volume is much more than a digest of various narratives. Despite having been written in such different languages as Latin, Old Norse, and Old Church Slavonic, these texts played similar roles in the formulation of — and reflection upon — Christian identities for their audiences in the lands recently converted to Christianity. The contributors to this volume, whilst employing a variety of methodological premises, all contemplate the extent to which this identity formation affected the nature of narrativity in the early historical works and their dynamics. By doing so, the authors intend to offer a comparative study of early history writing in the above-mentioned regions of medieval Europe.

In the first essay of this collection, Ildar Garipzanov deals with the *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen* by Adam of Bremen, traditionally evoked in the context of early history writing in Scandinavia. Garipzanov provides an overview of the specific historical contexts within which this specimen of *gesta episcoporum* was written and argues that Adam's narrative centres on a dramatic confrontation between paganism and Christianity and may have reflected a millennialist expectation of this confrontation's ultimate resolution in the near future. The dramatic nature of Adam's narrative was partly due to his institutional Christian identity linked to the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen and its northern mission, which was, in Adam's eyes, close to completion. This institutional aspect hardly appealed to the first Christian narrators in Scandinavia, although many of them quarried his work for helpful historical data; even the genre of Adam's work could be occasionally imitated (in Iceland in particular) but not, however, his agenda.

This kind of adaptive use is also found with the major surviving Latin narratives from twelfth-century Scandinavia, discussed in the first part of this volume. Michael Gelting offers a comparative study of the two earliest narratives from early twelfth-century Denmark, Ailnoth's work on St Canute and the anonymous *Chronicle of Roskilde*, and discusses particular historical contexts which triggered the writing of both texts. These two narratives are focused on the Christian period, with the preceding pagan past left in oblivion. Because of this conscious suppression of the memory of the pagan past — which Gelting considers a general phenomenon in twelfth-century Denmark — its history is presented as nothing but a Christian history, although the two narratives do this in different ways: Ailnoth drastically shortens this Christian past by focusing on the history of King

Sven II and his sons, while the chronicler of Roskilde, by contrast, extends it as far back as possible to discredit Hamburg-Bremen's claim to metropolitan authority over the Danish church. Thus Gelting emphasizes that, in spite of the dependence of the *Chronicle of Roskilde* on Adam of Bremen's text in terms of historical evidence, its anonymous author rejected Adam's institutional agenda altogether.

Lars Boje Mortensen presents a comparative study of two historical narratives written in Denmark and Norway in the second half of the twelfth century, the *Short History of the Kings of Denmark* by Sven Aggesen and the anonymous *Historia Norwegie*, in which the pagan past was already incorporated within the corresponding national narrative for the first time. On the other hand, paramount Christian events such as the martyrdoms of the two Olavs in Norway and of the two Canutes in Denmark still constitute the crucial events of corresponding local histories, and it was this Christian model that influenced local vernacular history-writing in the thirteenth century. With these two features, Aggesen's history and the *Historia Norwegie* are symptomatic of a twelfth-century Scandinavian discourse that had to relate the local past to universal history. Mortensen links the two works with local ecclesiastical centres and emphasizes that both narratives were 'institutional products' written for insiders: tiny intellectual elites. This factor led to a very thin transmission history of each text, which suggests that a number of similar texts with limited circulation might have perished before the modern age.

Sverre Bagge discusses *The Ancient History of the Norwegian Kings* by Theodoricus Monachus and the narrator's awareness of a clear distinction between hagiography and history in the late twelfth century. Theodoricus consciously wrote the latter and tried to follow the contemporary standards of political history. Bagge also analyses the role of biblical simile and some classical and medieval models in this process. Theodoricus was affiliated with the monastery of St Victor in Paris, and its library provided him with many models to follow, including Siegebert of Gembloux and Hugh of St Victor. Furthermore, similar to Mortensen's discussion of the concurrent Scandinavian historical narratives, Bagge considers the sections dealing with the reigns of the first Christian kings of Norway — Olav Tryggvason and St Olav — crucial for Theodoricus's text, and provides a close textual analysis of the methods and techniques used by the narrator to weave the history of Norway into the narrative of salvation.

The second part of the volume presents the earliest historical narratives written in Scandinavia in Old Norse. Theodore Andersson demonstrates that the importance of the two Olavs — noticeable in the twelfth-century Norwegian historical works — is typical of *Ágrip* (a *Twelfth-Century Synoptic History of the Kings of Norway*) too; and he explains this literary fixation on the kings by suggesting that their

conversion efforts first became the subject of historical writing at the time when *Ágrip* — as well as the *Historia Norwegie* and Theodoricus Monachus's history — was written. Andersson also emphasizes *Ágrip*'s distinction between a wicked heathen age and a superior Christian age and argues that this textual model of the two successive stages — earlier exemplified by Orosius's history — must have been easily available to the cleric authoring *Ágrip* and could have suggested to him how the succession of Norwegian kings might be organized into a narrative form.

Else Mundal explores the earliest surviving text in Old Norse from Iceland, *Íslendingabók*, written by the priest Ari the Wise. Mundal notes that, even though the title of the book indicates the history of Iceland and the Icelanders as the main topic (hence some chapters describe such secular matters as the settlement in Iceland and the establishment of Icelandic legal and administrative institutions), the text nonetheless centres on the Christianization of Iceland and the history of the bishops in Skálholt; Adam of Bremen's history might have provided Ari with a useful model. Furthermore, Mundal argues that the story of the official conversion in 999/1000 constitutes a climax in the narrative and provides a clear watershed dividing pagan and Christian times. Mundal argues that the narrative focus on conversion was due to Ari's agenda: in *Íslendingabók*, he attempted to write the Icelandic past into Christian history and thus to define an Icelandic identity first and foremost as the identity of a Christian people led by their bishops.

The latter aspect was further developed in a later Icelandic text written at the see of Skálholt around 1200, namely *Hungrvaka*, which Jonas Wellendorf discusses in the next chapter. This peculiar text was the first *gesta episcoporum* in the vernacular and the only one in Old Norse. Moreover, *Hungrvaka* is the only surviving synoptic history of bishops in Old Norse, and as such it can be compared to *Ágrip*. In both texts, the narrative plots deal with leaders of 'independent nations' — kings in *Ágrip* and the spiritual and semi-royal leaders of the Icelanders (their bishops) in *Hungrvaka*. Wellendorf argues that Adam of Bremen's narrative served as a literary model for the Icelandic text, but that this imitation was mainly due to especially tight institutional links between the bishopric of Skálholt and northern Germany. Similar to the *gesta episcoporum* from Saxony, the anonymous author of *Hungrvaka* communicates to his readers an institutional Christian identity, one connected to the Church of Skálholt.

The third part of the volume provides a comprehensive analysis of the three early historical texts written in East-Central Europe. Zbigniew Dalewski examines the *Deeds of the Princes of the Poles*, written in the early twelfth century by a western cleric known to modern scholars as Gallus Anonymus. Dalewski argues that this western peregrinator must have written his historical text near or at the

court of Duke Bolesław Wrymouth of Poland with the purpose of legitimizing his power at a time of political crisis. This particular aim left a noticeable imprint on the narrative. In this text, the Poles are presented as a Christian nation dearer to God than its neighbours. Yet Dalewski argues that they are not described exactly as a new chosen people in the biblical sense. Gallus's concept of divine election is rather connected to the Polish ruling dynasty, the Piasts. They were chosen by the Lord to rule over Poland even when they were still pagan, and it is only through them that God's grace has been reaching its people throughout its history. This 'dynastic' perspective, according to Dalewski, determines the narrative's treatment of the Polish pagan past. Hence, the juxtaposition of the pagan past with the Christian period is complemented by the opposition between the period before the Piasts and their own age, since Gallus makes it clear that with the first Piast ruler, God became directly involved in the history of Poland.

János Bak expertly analyses the *Chronicle of the Czechs* by Cosmas of Prague (a student of Master Franco in Liège and later the dean of the cathedral church of Prague), which was written just after the text of Gallus Anonymus was composed in Poland. Similarly to other narrators who received some education in Western Europe, Cosmas demonstrates a good knowledge of major classical and Christian texts, which provided him with ready narrative models; among them, Bak emphasizes the influence of Regino of Prüm. Bak argues that Cosmas did not care much about the genre of his narrative, which presents a mixture of chronicle, annals, and exempla. Furthermore, Bak discusses the narrator's hierarchy of identities and argues that by the early twelfth century, Christianity was established in Bohemia so firmly that there was no need for a literary propagation of Christian identity among Cosmas's readers. Thus Bak concludes that for Cosmas, national and Christian identities were almost identical: this explains, among other things, his negative attitude to such an out-group as the Jews of Prague.

László Veszprémy discusses the earliest surviving historical narrative from Hungary, the *Deeds of the Hungarians*, written by an anonymous cleric c. 1200. Veszprémy addresses in particular the question of why this narrative is so preoccupied with the pagan past and pagan rituals and argues that such an interest was partly due to the fact that the Hungarian Christian past had been already discussed in royal saints' lives, and the pagan origins of the Hungarians remained the only unexplored topic left for a narrator. At the same time, the medieval author portrayed his pre-Christian Hungarians as a people guided by the Holy Spirit, living in agreement with Christian customs, and settling the division of political power by means of a semi-Christian blood contract. As emphasized by Veszprémy, the Hungarians are never referred to in the narrative as pagans. Pagan customs (*more*

paganismo) are the main device used to present them as pagans, but even these customs did not project to the authentic pagan past. They were collected by the author from the oral traditions and countryside practices of concurrent Christian Hungary, and hence were a matter of curiosity rather than of contempt.

The final, fourth part of the volume is dedicated to early history writing in Kievan Rus', which — unlike in Scandinavia and East-Central Europe — started in a language (Old Church Slavonic) different from Byzantine Greek, the language of its cultural metropolia (Byzantium). Due to this linguistic difference, as Oleksiy Tolochko shows, the more general question of the origins of history writing in eleventh-century Rus' does not have an obvious answer. While addressing this question, he confronts the methodological tenets of Russian textologists and argues that the development of history writing in early Rus' was similar to other regions of Europe: from short annals to larger chronicles and histories in the twelfth century. Tolochko argues that three sources were especially important in the shaping of chronicle writing in Kievan Rus' at the turn of the twelfth century and its first specimen, the *Primary Chronicle* of Abbot Sylvester of St Michael's Monastery in Vyduhichi: local Easter tables with historical notes, Byzantine universal chronicles with their concept of Christian chronology, and local hagiographic and liturgical texts, such as the earliest works related to the cult of Boris and Gleb and Ilarion's *Sermon on Law and Grace*. Tolochko concludes that, all in all, Christian chronology was the most important aspect in terms of shaping chronicle writing in early Rus'.

A more detailed discussion of the early twelfth-century Kievan *Primary Chronicle* as it has survived in the manuscript tradition is provided by Donald Ostrowsky. He discusses the complicated structure of this narrative and, contrary to Tolochko, argues that it was compiled by a monk, Vasilii, in the Kievan Caves Monastery between 1113 and 1116. In the narrative itself, Ostrowski discerns two 'virtual past attitudes', each represented by different modes of emplotment: the first (Comedy) from the beginning of the narrative to 1051, and the other (Romance) from 1051 to 1114. He links the second mode of emplotment with Vasilii and the first with an earlier clerical chronicler working between 1054 and 1078, whose text and agenda were incorporated into the *Primary Chronicle*. Ostrowski also argues that, although pagans are an integral component in both parts of the narrative, their role changes after 1051. Before that date, the descriptions of pagans are used to explain the development of Rus' from pagan ignorance to Christian knowledge, though without denigrating the pagan past. After 1051, the pagan Others — especially the Polovtsians — are repeatedly invoked as God's tool punishing sinful Christians.

Early history writing in Novgorod, the northern urban centre connecting Kievan Rus' with Scandinavia, can be attested at the same time as the *Primary*

Chronicle was composed in Kiev. Timofey Guimon examines the early Novgorodian annals as preserved in the *Elder and Younger Versions* of *The First Novgorod Chronicle* and attempts to reconstruct its earliest stage in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. He suggests that although some short annalistic records must have been written in Novgorod in the eleventh century, it is only in 1115 that the first compilation combining these historical notes with Kievan materials was assembled in Novgorod, and it was thereafter continued with the archiepiscopal Novgorodian annals — written by clerics on the archbishops' staff, such as Cyric the Novgorodian and German Voyata — on a more-or-less regular basis throughout the twelfth century. The combination of these materials allowed the narrative both to define the place of Novgorod in universal history and to record the minutes of events, useful in practical matters. This combination also reflected a hierarchy of identities shared by the twelfth-century annalists and their readers: a political identity attached to Christian Rus', a regional Novgorodian one, and, finally, institutional Christian identities linked to the archbishopric of Novgorod and to smaller ecclesiastical communities of particular annalists.

Although contributions to this volume were written in response to a common set of questions discussed at a joint workshop in Kiev in 2008,¹³ attentive readers may notice some discrepancies in style and conclusions. After all, the authors of the following chapters represent academic communities and identities as diverse as those of the narrators about whom they have written. Yet this diversity has been an immanent aspect of both modern and medieval historiographies, and the awareness of such polyphony helps us to better understand both modern medieval studies and medieval literary culture. From this perspective, the discussion of the early Christian historical narratives created on the north-eastern periphery of twelfth-century Europe will be of benefit not only to the students of Scandinavian and East-Central and Eastern European history and literature, but also to those interested in medieval history writing — in particular, in the nature of narrativity and the interplay between a text and identity in the Middle Ages.

¹³ This workshop and some preliminary work on this volume have been financed by the YFF project 'The "Forging" of Christian Identity in the Northern Periphery', funded by the Norwegian Research Council.

CHRISTIANITY AND PAGANISM IN ADAM OF BREMEN'S NARRATIVE

Ildar H. Garipzanov

The *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen* is a historical narrative written by Adam of Bremen, the *magister* of the cathedral school, in c. 1072–76. The text consisting of four books is well known to students of Ottonian and early Salian Germany and Viking Age and early medieval Scandinavia, and a great number of German and Scandinavian historians have discussed various aspects of this text and the evidence that it provides.¹ The narrative belongs to the genre of *gesta episcoporum* (the deeds of bishops) and in this respect is distinct from texts describing the deeds of kings or the history of *gentes*.² The author has identified himself personally with the archbishopric and its history — especially when he describes its mission, *legatio gentium*, and narrates its relations with

I would like to thank Hans-Werner Goetz for his helpful comments on this paper.

¹ For recent overviews of related historiography, see Volker Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde: Identität und Fremdheit in den Chroniken Adams von Bremen, Helmolds von Bosau und Arnolds von Lübeck*, *Orbis mediaevalis: Vorstellungswelten des Mittelalters*, 4 (Berlin: Akademie, 2002), pp. 29–37.

² For an overview of the genre, which appeared in the early Middle Ages, see Michel Sot, *Gesta episcoporum, gesta abbatorum*, *Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental*, 37 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981). Cf. Reinhold Kaiser, 'Die Gesta episcoporum als Genus der Geschichtsschreibung', in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter, *Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 32 (Vienna: Oldenbourg, 1994), pp. 459–80, for a more differentiated approach to the *gesta episcoporum*, emphasizing diversity within the genre.

neighbouring bishoprics as well as Saxon dukes.³ Such self-identification is especially important, since Adam's historical account differs from other works of this genre in that it presents the history of a missionary archbishopric oriented outwards towards northern lands as much as inwards. This specific institutional context left a recognizable imprint on the text, and in the past fifty years a number of scholars have emphasized the importance of the northern mission of Hamburg-Bremen in terms of the structure of this narrative and for the institutional identity of its author.⁴ Thus, it is this 'missionary Christian identity' that the narrator conveys to his readers. Direct addresses to the reader make it clear that it was the clergy of the archbishopric, and especially in Bremen, that Adam envisioned as his audience,⁵ and he accentuates the importance of the northern mission for their institutional identity.

The time period the text was written in provides another specific historical context that some scholars such as Hans-Werner Goetz have pointed to: following the disastrous pontificate of Adalbert (d. 1072), the archbishopric in general and its northern mission in particular entered a time of crisis. Adam's work, written for a new archbishop, Liemar (1073–1101), and other potential clerical readers in late eleventh-century Bremen, was a literary response to this crisis, which presented a historical claim to a specially elevated status for the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen, connected to its northern mission.⁶ Gerd Althoff has also noted that Liemar was elevated to the archbishopric without consultation with the cathedral chapter and that Adam must have written his book in order to urge the new

³ See for instance Carl F. Hallencreutz, *Adam Bremensis and Sueonia*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1984), p. 13; and Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde*, pp. 47–58.

⁴ See especially Aage Trommer, 'Komposition und Tendenz in der Hamburgischen Kirchengeschichte Adam von Bremens', *Classica et mediaevalia: Revue danoise de philologie et d'histoire*, 17 (1956), 207–57 (pp. 211–38); and Hans-Werner Goetz, 'Constructing the Past: Religious Dimensions and Historical Consciousness in Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*', in *Making of Christian Myths*, pp. 17–51.

⁵ While describing the deeds of St Rimbart, Adam addresses the reader: 'Quid autem dicimus interim nostrum fecisse archiepiscopum? Require in Gestis eius, capitulo XX'. Adam, *Gesta*, I. 39, p. 42.

⁶ Hans-Werner Goetz, 'Geschichtsschreibung und Recht: Zur rechtlichen Legitimierung des Bremer Erzbistums in der Chronik Adams von Bremen', in *Recht und Alltag im Hanseraum: Festschrift für Gerhard Theuerkauf zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by Silke Urbanski and others (Lüneburg: Deutsches Salzmuseum Lüneburg, 1993), pp. 191–205; and Goetz, 'Religious Dimensions and Historical Consciousness', pp. 39–40.

Archbishop to protect the interests of his see.⁷ Furthermore, as emphasized recently by Volker Scior, by the time that Adam was writing his narrative, the ecclesiastical authority of the archbishopric over the northern dioceses had been threatened by attempts by Scandinavian kings such as Emund and Harald Hardrada to establish national churches independent of Hamburg-Bremen, and by the support given to these plans by Gregory VII.⁸ In this situation, the legal right of the archbishopric to supervise northern churches needed to be defended with reference to the historical past.

From these specific institutional and historical contexts, which have been thoroughly discussed by students of Adam's text, I would like to go a step further and emphasize that the crucial role of a northern mission for the history of the archbishopric noticeably influenced the structure of Adam's text and its dynamics as a literary narrative. Among other things, this influence led to the constant juxtaposition of Christianity (first and foremost associated with the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen) and paganism (taking various forms). Any missionary narrative, regardless whether it belongs to the genre of missionary hagiography or the history of mission, needs these two protagonists, whose constant struggle would provide a driving force for the narrative from its outset to the final page. In Adam's history, these antipodes coexist in the universe as two essential phenomena, Good and Evil, in accordance with divine design. Thus relapses into paganism among neighbouring *gentes* happen time and again since, in the eyes of Adam, they are the way by which the Lord 'confounds our faithlessness'.⁹ Paganism thus exists not only as a passive target of missionary activity, but also to test and strengthen the faith of the Christians. As a missionary narrative, Adam's history does not construct a simple diachronic antithesis of the pagan past and Christian present: although the forces of Christianity gradually prevail over those of paganism, they are deemed to oppose each other from the outset of missionary history all the way to Adam's time. As a result, the constant struggle between Christianity and pagans, pagan reaction, and relapses into paganism 'emplot' the narrative from the moment

⁷ Gerd Althoff, '*Causa scribendi* und Darstellungsabsicht: Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde und andere Beispiele', in *Litterae medii aevi: Festschrift für Johanne Autenrieth zu ihrem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Michael Borgolte and Herrad Spilling (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1988), pp. 117–33 (pp. 128–30).

⁸ For more details and bibliography, see Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde*, pp. 60–64.

⁹ While talking about the relapse into paganism among the Slavs living between the Elbe and the Oder in the early eleventh century, Adam states: 'ille, inquam, modicam gentilium portionem nunc indurare voluit, per quos nostra confunderetur perfidia'. Adam, *Gesta*, II. 44, p. 105.

the archbishopric was established in Saxony in the late eighth century to the time when the narrative was written in the 1070s.

Volker Scior has recently emphasized that the confrontation between Christians and pagans is narrated by Adam as one between the Christians of the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen and the pagan peoples targeted by missionary activity. Hence, the connection between Christianity, *nostra fides* and *nostra religio*, on the one hand, and the archbishopric and its identity, on the other, is crucial throughout the narrative.¹⁰ This institutional self-identification lays the basis for a specific in-group identity unifying clergymen of the archbishopric. Thus, the presentation of the history of the archbishopric as a constant struggle between the two protagonists becomes the main mechanism by which the author conveys an institutional 'missionary Christian identity' to his primary readers, Liemar and the clergy of Bremen.

The Structure and Plot of the History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen

The significance of the juxtaposition between *Christianitas* and *paganismus* in Adam's text has been recently stressed by David Fraesdorff, who argues that this distinction closely corresponds in the narrative to geographical and climatic differences between Christian Europe and the pagan north: Christianity is associated with the warm, light, and 'friendly south', and paganism with the cold and dark north hardly suitable for living.¹¹ Fraesdorff also emphasizes that the concept of the north in the narrative is not purely geographical, since it referred to the regions of Northern and Eastern Europe that were subject to the mission of the archbishopric and populated by Scandinavians and Slavs. In this sense, the term 'north' (*aquilo* in Latin) becomes shorthand for paganism in the text, and this emphasis on the evil nature of the north is of course inspired by a prophecy of Jeremiah: 'Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land' (Jeremiah 1. 14). Furthermore, Fraesdorff stresses that the juxtaposition

¹⁰ Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde*, p. 87.

¹¹ David Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden: Vorstellungen und Fremdkategorien bei Rimbert, Thietmar von Merseburg, Adam von Bremen und Helmold von Bosau*, *Orbis mediaevalis: Vorstellungswelten des Mittelalters*, 5 (Berlin: Akademie, 2005), pp. 261–66 and 271–72; and David Fraesdorff, 'The Power of Imagination: The *Christianitas* and the Pagan North during Conversion to Christianity (800–1200)', *Medieval History Journal*, 5. 2 (2002), 309–32 (pp. 317–19).

of the *christiani* and *pagani* in the narrative is not simply religious but also cultural (*ritus*) and ethical (*mores*). The pagans belong to the world of barbarians, to cultural alterity, and vice versa the lack of Christian virtues such as *humanitas* and *misericordia* and the manifestation of vices such as *crudelitas* qualify a person as pagan.¹²

Yet Fraesdorff's thesis of the opposition between the friendly Christian south and the hostile pagan north is mainly based on the fourth and final book in which Adam describes northern lands. In the first book, Christianity and paganism meet on the territory where the archbishopric was founded, and their confrontation establishes the main plot of the narrative. So the text starts with the conquest of Saxony by the Franks in the late eighth century — when that land was delivered to the worship of God ('divino cultui').¹³ Adam first provides an ethnographic digression on Saxony, whose description, as Scior notes, corresponds to the territory of the future archbishopric and its missionary activity.¹⁴ Although the pre-Christian Saxons are presented as a people worshipping pagan gods, Adam stresses that, in regard to their morals, they tried to follow many useful and noble norms, according to the law of nature ('secundum legem naturae honesta'). So their only deficiency was the ignorance of the Creator and of the truth of His worship,¹⁵ and the establishment of the archbishopric naturally resolved this problem.

While establishing the narrative's plot, Adam quotes a charter of Charlemagne, which probably had been forged not long before Adam wrote his text. The forged charter dates the establishment of the see at Bremen to 788 and the beginning of the archbishopric's mission just to the time when the conversion of the Saxons, the starting point of the narrative, takes place.¹⁶ So here is a clear example showing how Adam's institutional identity and the literary plot affected his active remembrance of the eighth- and ninth-century history of the region. Furthermore, he states (I. 16) that in 832 Hamburg was chosen as the metropolitan see for the Danes, Swedes, and Slavs, which corresponds to the wider geographical scope of his narrative,

¹² See Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, pp. 272–90.

¹³ Adam, *Gesta*, Prologus, p. 3.

¹⁴ See Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde*, pp. 81–86. In agreement with Fraesdorff's point, Christian Franks are described in this digression as located to the south from pagan Saxony.

¹⁵ Adam, *Gesta*, I. 6, p. 8: 'quae eis ad veram beatudinem premerendam proficere potuissent, si ignorantiam creatoris sui non haberent et a veritate culturae illius non essent alieni'.

¹⁶ Adam, *Gesta*, I. 12, pp. 14–17. On this forgery, its origin from the circles of Archbishop Adalbert in 1056–62, and related bibliography, see Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde*, pp. 41–43.

including the cosmographic description in Book IV.¹⁷ These examples thus illustrate well that Adam of Bremen had a clear concept visible throughout the text; namely, that the archbishopric, the history of which he was narrating, was ultimately tied to and therefore defined by its mission among the northern peoples and Slavs.

The first book deals with the missionary activity of the archbishopric up to the year 936, and its second part narrates the numerous raids by Vikings into the Frankish lands and the territory of the archbishopric in particular. This early phase is presented as a constant struggle between Christians and northern pagans, especially the Danes. Periods of successful missionary work are interrupted by periods of pagan reaction. Denmark is the main battleground in this phase, and — similar to the other northern regions — the Christian mission in the Danish lands is presented as a long-lasting and laborious process, where success and regress coincide. Hence, while speaking of Danish kings in the early tenth century, Adam concludes:

Nobis hoc scire sufficiat omnes adhuc paganos fuisse, ac in tanta regnorum mutatione vel excursione barbarorum christianitatem in Dania, quae a sancto Ansgario plantata est, aliquantulum remansisse, non totam defecisse.¹⁸

[It will suffice for us to know that up to this time they all were pagans, and that amidst such changes in rulers and the assaults of barbarians a little of the Christianity which had been planted by St Ansgar survived in Denmark and did not entirely disappear.]

The second book starts with the establishment of Danish dioceses under the supremacy of Hamburg-Bremen, the institutional change that indicates, in the eyes of Adam, the establishment of Christianity in Denmark. Yet the struggle between the two protagonists continues to drive the narrative, since most political events in this region are still presented within this paradigm. So, for instance, the conspiracy of King Sven Forkbeard against his father Harald Bluetooth is presented as a Danish conspiracy to renounce Christianity.¹⁹ The same approach is visible in the description of Norwegian and Swedish kings, some of whom relapsed into paganism after initial conversion.²⁰ As a result, by the end of Book II, Norway and Sweden remain the target of the Christian mission. At the same time, Adam makes it clear that paganism was still present within the archbishopric itself. It survived in its remote marshy lands in the form of pagan customs ('ritus paganicos'), and in the early eleventh century Archbishop Unwan (1013–29) is said to have uprooted

¹⁷ For details and more examples, see Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde*, pp. 44–46.

¹⁸ Adam, *Gesta*, I. 52, p. 53.

¹⁹ Adam, *Gesta*, II. 27, p. 87.

²⁰ For example, see the description of Eric the Victorious: Adam, *Gesta*, II. 38, p. 99.

sacred pagan groves there and built new churches in their stead.²¹ Furthermore, Adam accuses the Saxon duke Bernard of driving the *gens Winulorum* to paganism by his cruel oppression and points to ducal avarice as the main reason for that relapse.²² The latter point is reiterated later in the narrative, with generalizing remarks on the greed of Saxon princes hindering the conversion of Slavs.²³

The significance of the mission and the juxtaposition of Christianity and paganism for Adam's narrative should not obscure the fact that he writes in the genre of *gesta episcoporum*,²⁴ and in accordance with the genre his narrative is structured by the pontificates of the archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen. This structural principle becomes especially important for Book III, which has been sometimes described as the biography of Archbishop Adalbert (1043–72), since it narrates his deeds and character. At the time Adam was writing his text, Adalbert must have been remembered differently among the clergy of the archbishopric, and his posthumous fame still remained a controversial matter. Such a situation explains the importance of this personage for the narrative, especially as Adam is clearly critical of the Archbishop and his actions and blames him for the crisis within the archbishopric the narrator was witnessing in the 1070s.

At the same time, the biographical description of Adalbert and his pontificate is still set within the main narrative plot: Christianity and paganism confronting each other. In addition to these two protagonists, Adam adds pseudo-Christians (*pseudochristiani*), who together with pagans inflict damage upon true Christians.²⁵ These pseudo-Christians oppose right Christians not only inside the archbishopric but also in the north, like the vagabond Bishop Osmund usurping ecclesiastical

²¹ Adam, *Gesta*, II. 48, p. 108.

²² Adam, *Gesta*, II. 48, p. 109: 'gentem Winulorum crudeliter opprimens ad necessitatem paganismi coegit'.

²³ In regard to this *gens*, 'si conversionem gentis avaricia principum non prepediret', Adam, *Gesta*, II. 71, p. 133. In regard to the Slavs east of Saxony, 'populos Sclavorum iamdudum procul dubio facile converti posse ad christianitatem, nisi obstitisset avaricia Saxonum', Adam, *Gesta*, III. 23, p. 166.

²⁴ In the Prologue, he directly states that his book is about the deeds of the archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen, who elevated that Church and spread Christianity among pagan peoples: 'sanctissimorum patrum, per quos ecclesia exaltata et christianitas in gentibus dilatata est, gesta revolvo'. Adam, *Gesta*, Prologus, p. 2.

²⁵ Adam, *Gesta*, III. 1, p. 143: 'Quoniam vero difficile est omnes viri actus aut bene aut pleniter aut in ordinem posse diffiniri a me, precipua gestorum eius summatim quaeque delibans affectu condolentis ad eam pervenire desidero calumpniam, qua nobilis et dives parrochia Hammaburgensis et Bremensis altera vastata est a paganis, altera discrepta est a pseudochristianis.'

authority in Sweden.²⁶ Thus, the pseudo-Christians introduced by Adam in Book III are those who confront the archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen and their northern mission, and the actions of the former are presented as leading to the revival of paganism in one way or another. For instance, Adam mentions that Harald Hardrada had bishops in Norway consecrated in Gaul and England, not in Hamburg-Bremen, which effectively made them pseudo-Christians. As a result, tyrannical trends of his rule are transformed in Adam's account with the contrast of Harald as a semi-pagan ruler with his saintly brother, St Olav. Hence, according to the narrator, Harald Hardrada not only destroyed Christian churches and tortured many Christians to death, but also was engaged in magical arts;²⁷ the latter activity, of course, equated the cruel King with pagan magicians.

The juxtaposition of Christianity and paganism as moral antipodes affects not only the depictions of historical events and personages in Book III, but also the presentation of Archbishop Adalbert. His character is ambivalent from the very beginning, and Adam's positive remarks are mixed with episodes showing the Archbishop's submissiveness to secular authorities or his liturgical innovations deviating from the traditional Latin rite.²⁸ Later in the book, Adam compares royal courts, where Adalbert spent much of his time, to another kind of idolatry ('veluti secundam ydolatriam').²⁹ Starting with Chapter 36, moral shortcomings in Adalbert's character are emphasized even further, and here Sallust's moralizing style provides a textual model. More importantly, these shortcomings are described in a way that suggests some sinful or even pagan inclinations. For instance, Adam mentions that Adalbert is said not only to have entertained himself through listening to fables while in bed and interpreting dreams after awakening, but also to have practised auspices whenever he travelled.³⁰ The latter practice must have been considered by many clerical readers a suspiciously pagan practice. Although Adam rejects this opinion, he still blames the pseudo-Christian entourage of Adalbert for deflating his morals and reputation.³¹ Furthermore, Adam reports of a certain visionary woman publicly professing that Archbishop Adalbert will die within two

²⁶ Adam, *Gesta*, III. 15, pp. 155–56.

²⁷ Adam, *Gesta*, III. 17, p. 159.

²⁸ Adam, *Gesta*, III. 5, p. 147; and III. 27, p. 170.

²⁹ Adam, *Gesta*, III. 55, p. 199.

³⁰ Adam, *Gesta*, III. 39, p. 182: 'Quare dicitur eum morem insuevisse, ut, dum cubitum ibat, fabulis delectaretur, cum expergisceretur, somniis, quotiens vere iter inceptit, auspiciis.'

³¹ Adam, *Gesta*, III. 63, p. 208.

years unless he is converted ('nisi forte converteretur').³² Of course, the absurdness of this condition is signalled in the text by the use of the clause *nisi forte*; but after reporting about Adalbert's death and his last positive deeds, Adam states that the Archbishop left other signs of his repentance and conversion in the last year of his life.³³ So, such ambiguous remarks and hints suggest to the attentive reader that Adalbert's morals may have deviated from Christian virtues to pagan vices and that he had experienced inner spiritual conversion only at the end of his life.

This image of Adalbert corresponds to another story in Book III, Chapters 46–50, in which relapse into paganism is viewed as part of divine drama. Among his wrongdoings, Adalbert stripped his churches of their sacred liturgical objects made of gold and silver in order to pay dues to lay authorities. Holy crosses were melted down and, in Adam's eyes, God responded to this sacrilegious act with the full might of His divine vengeance: Adalbert was expelled from the royal court, and lay princes plundered the ecclesiastical property of the archbishopric. Also significantly, the Slavs living to the east of the Elbe relapsed into paganism, and some lay princes and clerics were killed there. This relapse into paganism and the incursion of the pagan Slavs are presented in the narrative as acts of great vengeance ('vindictae magnitudo') and thus as a necessary element in the contemporary divine order.³⁴

The final seven chapters of Book III (III. 72–78) in the MGH edition of Bernhard Schmeidler present a major textual problem for Adam's narrative. After a study of the preserved manuscript tradition, Anne Kristensen persuasively argued in 1975 that this part of Adam's work in fact constituted the first chapters of his original Book IV (IV. 1a–7a).³⁵ This section discusses the unfulfilled plans of Adalbert to travel to Scandinavia with missionary goals in order to expand his archiepiscopal authority in those regions. As Volker Scior has emphasized, placing these chapters at the beginning of Book IV changes its concept considerably: the book then is not simply an ethnographical and geographical overview of northern

³² Adam, *Gesta*, III. 64, p. 210.

³³ Adam, *Gesta*, III. 70, p. 217: 'Nam et alia multa reliquit signa penitentiae vel conversionis suae.'

³⁴ Adam, *Gesta*, III. 50, p. 193.

³⁵ Anne K. G. Kristensen, *Studien zur Adam von Bremen Überlieferung* (Copenhagen: Det historiske Institut ved Københavns Universitet, 1975). See also Tore Nyberg, 'Stad, skrift och stift: Några historiska inledningsfrågor', in *Adam av Bremen: Historien om Hamburgstiftet och dess biskopar*, trans. by Emanuel Svenberg (Stockholm: Proprius, 1984), pp. 295–339 (pp. 301–06); Hallencreutz, *Adam Bremensis*, pp. 18–19; and Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde*, p. 34, n. 33.

lands, but rather a description connected to a missionary trip planned by Adalbert but left to be fulfilled, in Adam's opinion, by Archbishop Liemar. Book IV therefore describes the missionary space (*Missionsraum*) of the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen and stresses the need to maintain and extend its authority in the north. This interpretation corresponds to the final book's content, which not only describes northern lands but also explains the customs of northern *gentes* so that Liemar, the receiver of the book, would be able to accomplish the missionary voyage that Adalbert left unfulfilled.³⁶ The route to the north is described in detail, and at some points Adam slips in his narrative to addressing the reader — and Liemar in particular — directly, as in the following passage: 'if you pass through Jutland into Fyn, your route is a straight way to the north'.³⁷

The difference between the first three parts of Adam's history and its final book is important not only for defining the main dramatic plot of the narrative, but also for understanding its ending. Book IV provides no resolution to the text and thus allows us to define it as a dramatic history with an open ending.

Adam's Narrative as a Dramatic History

Unlike tragedy and comedy, which conclude with a definite (negative or positive) outcome, drama with an open ending is always ambivalent; its resolution lies in the future and depends on the reader. These characteristics nicely apply to the final part of Adam's narrative.

The struggle between paganism and missionary Christianity does not find its ultimate resolution at the end of Adam's text — in contrast to the concluding remarks in the final Chapter 44 where Adam states that the Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes have already learnt how to sing alleluia in the praise of God, and that in their lands the altars of the demons have been destroyed and churches are being erected in various places.³⁸ In spite of this triumphant conclusion, Book IV

³⁶ See Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde*, pp. 68–72 and 137.

³⁷ Adam, *Gesta*, IV. 4, p. 232: 'si per Iudland in Finem tenderis, directam in septentrionem viam habes'. The English translation is from Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. by Francis J. Tschan, 2nd edn by Timothy Reuter (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 189.

³⁸ Adam, *Gesta*, IV. 44, p. 280: 'Ecce illa ferocissima Danorum sive Nortmannorum aut Sueonum natio, quae iuxta verba beati Gregorii "nihil aliud scivit nisi barbarum frendere, iam dudum novit in Dei laudibus alleluia resonare". [...] Ecce patria illa horribilis, semper inaccessa propter

describing contemporary Scandinavia is probably richer and more dramatic in the description of pagan northern lands than all the preceding books. Scior argues that Adam's narrative always distinguishes our world (*noster orbis*) from the other world (*alter mundus*).³⁹ The latter is associated with Sweden and Norway as well as the lands beyond, while Denmark functions as a kind of intermediary. Yet this juxtaposition of the Christian world and the pagan alterity visibly increases in the final book.

In the geographical digressions of this book, the farther lands lie from Christendom the more they exhibit peculiar abnormalities and monstrosities, some of which derive from the reports of classical geographers concerning remote southern lands. Of course, the increasing numbers of monsters on the farthest edge of the *alter mundus* can be interpreted as an indication that the end of the human world is close. At the same time, this feature of the narrative brings the opposition between paganism and Christianity to a dramatic, unresolved ending. It is up to its main reader, Archbishop Liemar, to resolve this conflict through a missionary trip to the north.

The chapter (III. 72) describing Adalbert's unfulfilled plan of a missionary trip all the way to the farthestmost lands of the north states that by doing so he would have become the fourth evangelist following the path of the other three — namely, Ansgar, Rimbert and Unni.⁴⁰ According to Kristensen, this chapter opens Book IV and is thus important for its concept (IV. 1a). The reference to the three missionaries as evangelists in this chapter is not accidental. Earlier in Book I, Ansgar is referred to as 'evangelista noster' (our evangelist) and Unni as 'evangelista Dei' (evangelist of God).⁴¹ By cancelling his missionary voyage, Adalbert failed to become the fourth evangelist, and Book IV encourages Liemar to take up the task and complete the Gospel (and history) of the northern mission.⁴² Thus, the end of history for Adam potentially lies in the near future and depends on his primary reader. Yet for a Christian author the end of missionary history would have been

cultum ydolorum, [...] deposito iam naturali furore predicatores veritatis ubique certatim admittit, destructisque demonum aris ecclesiae passim eriguntur, et nomen Christi communi ab omnibus effertur preconio.'

³⁹ Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde*, pp. 103–34.

⁴⁰ Adam, *Gesta*, III. 72, pp. 219–20: '[...] primum fuisse Ansgarium, deinde Rimbertum, postea Unni, se [i.e. Adalbert] vero quartum evangelistam postulari'.

⁴¹ Adam, *Gesta*, I. 26, p. 32; and I. 62, p. 59.

⁴² In this perspective, the final chapter of Book IV (see note 38) can be interpreted as indicating that the northern lands are ready for such a mission.

associated with the Apocalypse. Adam knew the words of Jesus speaking of the end of the world in Matthew 24. 14: 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.' In this perspective, the sharp distinction between monstrous paganism and missionary Christianity in the final book definitely acquires some apocalyptic overtones.⁴³

The three missionary evangelists differ from the other archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen not only by their extensive missionary activity in the north but also by their visits to central Sweden and its centre, Birka; Unni even died and was buried there. So, the place definitely plays an important role for the narrative — but what is that role? Adam seems to provide an answer when first mentioning Birka in Book I (Chapter 26): he identifies the Swedes with the biblical Gog and Magog and recalls the prophecy of Ezechiel, which was fulfilled by Ansgar's mission to them: 'And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the Lord' (Ezechiel 39. 6).⁴⁴ The dominance of Gothic peoples in contemporary Sweden provides Adam with the key for such an identification, since many early medieval writers starting with Ambrose of Milan identified Gog and Magog with the Goths.⁴⁵ That is why at the end of Book I Adam describes Birka as a stronghold of the Goths located in the middle of Sweden.⁴⁶

Adam, with his profound knowledge of the Bible and patristic authors, also knew well that Gog and Magog had also been mentioned in the Book of Revelations in connection with the Apocalypse:

(7) And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, (8) And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. (Revelations 20. 7–8)

In the course of the narration, the region around Birka has been converted by the three 'evangelists' time and again, but in the final description the Swedes are even

⁴³ On eschatological features of the north in Adam's work, see Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, pp. 309–17.

⁴⁴ Adam, *Gesta*, I. 26, pp. 31–32.

⁴⁵ For more details on this medieval tradition starting with Ambrose, see Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, pp. 312–16.

⁴⁶ Adam, *Gesta*, I. 60, p. 58: 'Birca est oppidum Gothorum in medio Suevoniae positum.' See also Nyberg, 'Stad, skrift och stift', pp. 314–17; and Carl F. Hallencreutz, 'Missionstrategie och religionstolkning: Till frågan om Adam av Bremen och Uppsalatemplet', in *Uppsala och Adam av Bremen*, ed. by Anders Hultgård (Nora: Nya Doxa, 1997), pp. 117–30 (pp. 128–29).

more plagued by pagan superstitions. The millennialist simile with Gog and Magog is further emphasized in Book IV as well by references in Chapter 25 to human monsters living next to the Swedes like the Amazons, Cynocephali, Cyclops, and Hymantopodes. Furthermore, the narration of monsters is followed by the famous description of the Uppsala temple, which is presented as the symbolic centre of the pagan north.⁴⁷ This shrine of Gog and Magog shall be confronted by the fourth evangelist in order to complete the Gospel and history of the mission. Consequently, the temple of Uppsala and related rituals exemplify the pagan alterity ('caput est supersticionis barbaricae'),⁴⁸ and it is with reference to this symbolic role of the temple that its description has to be approached.

The Temple of Uppsala

The importance of this temple for Adam's history became the leitmotif of the dissertation published by Henrik Janson in 1998. He argues that the receiver of the book, Liemar, was an active member of the anti-Gregorian faction. In the same years, Gregory VII supported the development of the Swedish church independent of the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen. Based on these developments and on little evidence for the existence of pagan temples in Sweden (including in Uppsala) in this period, Janson concludes that Adam's grotesque image of the pagan temple hides his representation of Gregory VII as the Antichrist and his criticism of a Gregorian faction in Uppsala at the time.⁴⁹ There is no room in this chapter to discuss this concept in detail. It is sufficient to say that, even though Janson's elegant interpretation brings into consideration the rich historical context of the investiture conflict, it can hardly be corroborated by Adam's text itself. A few hidden references to the Gregorians and Gregory VII postulated by the Swedish scholar are too vague to support such an identification, and they belong to the stock of metaphorical accusations used by medieval Christian authors against their opponents. Moreover, if Adam had been such an ardent opponent of the Gregorians as Janson suggests, one would have expected to find a more direct and explicit criticism of them in the narrative.

⁴⁷ Adam, *Gesta*, IV. 26–27, pp. 257–60.

⁴⁸ Adam, *Gesta*, IV. 30, p. 262.

⁴⁹ Henrik Janson, *'Templum nobilissimum': Adam av Bremen, Uppsalatemplet och konfliktlinjerna i Europa kring år 1075* (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1998).

Unlike the alleged hidden political aims of Adam, his Christian agenda is much more obvious in defining the dynamics of the text. In this perspective, the image of the pagan temple and its significance fits well with the main plot of the narrative and in particular the identification of the Swedes with the biblical Gog and Magog. The symbolic role of the Uppsala temple does not mean that it must have existed in reality,⁵⁰ especially since its description puts as much stress on an adjacent sacred grove as on the temple itself. More importantly, pagan practices in Birka were mentioned in some previous authoritative works known to Adam, such as the *Life of Ansgar*, and this knowledge could have been supported by some hearsay about 'pagan' practices in Uppsala. Based on this fragmentary evidence, Adam could easily complete the picture of the pagan stronghold in the north, with reliance on available classical prototypes. Timothy Bolton points, for example, to two probable models: Tacitus's description of the religious beliefs of *Germani* and Orosius's passage dealing with the pagan practices of the Cimbri in 106.⁵¹

The possible influence of classical authors on some elements in the description of the Uppsala temple corresponds to the influence of the moral approach of an author such as Sallust on the presentation of material and to the numerous textual quotations from him and other classical authors such as Vergil and Lucan.⁵² In Book IV, for instance, Adam relies heavily on Orosius, Martianus Capella, Solinus, and Macrobius.⁵³ At the same time, the Bible provides another crucial point of reference for the described events: biblical references are as numerous in the narrative as classical ones, and some biblical prophecies guide Adam in his reading of the hidden meanings of historical events.⁵⁴ In this perspective, the use of the number

⁵⁰ On the absence of archaeological evidence for this temple in Uppsala, see Else Nordahl, ... *'templum quod Ubsola dicitur' ... i arkeologisk belysning* (Uppsala: Societas Archaeologica Upsaliensis, 1996); and Anne-Sofie Gråslund, 'Adams Uppsala – och arkeologins', in *Uppsala och Adam av Bremen*, ed. by Hultgård, pp. 102–15. For a more recent archaeological report, similar in its conclusions to the previous two, see Magnus Alkarp and Neil Price, 'Tempel av guld eller kyrka av trä? Markradarundersökningar vid Gamla Uppsala kyrka', *Fornvännen*, 100 (2005), 261–72.

⁵¹ Timothy Bolton, 'A Textual Historical Response to Adam of Bremen's Witness to the Activities of the Uppsala-Cult', in *Transformasjoner i vikingtid og norrøn middelalder*, ed. by Gro Steinsland (Oslo: Unipub, 2006), pp. 61–89.

⁵² For details, see Rudolf Buchner, 'Adams von Bremen geistige Anleihen bei der Antike', *Mittelateinisches Jahrbuch*, 2 (1965), 96–101.

⁵³ Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde*, p. 89.

⁵⁴ The MGH edition and Tschan's translation trace these borrowings in detail. See also Anders Piltz, 'Adam, Bibeln och auctores: En studie i literär teknik', in *Adam av Bremen*, trans. by Svenberg, pp. 340–53.

'seventy-two' in the description of pagan sacrifices at the Uppsala temple, which occurred once every nine years, is particularly interesting:

Sacrificium itaque tale est: ex omni animante quod masculinum est, novem capita offeruntur, quorum sanguine deos [tales] placari mos est. Corpora autem suspenduntur in lucum qui proximus est templo. Is enim lucus tam sacer est gentilibus, ut singulae arbores eius ex morte vel tabo immolatorum divinae credantur. Ibi etiam canes et equi pendent cum hominibus, *quorum corpora mixtim suspensa narravit mihi aliquis christianorum LXXII vidisse [fuisse BI]*.⁵⁵ (my emphasis)

[The sacrifice is of this nature: of every living thing that is male, they offer nine heads, with the blood of which it is customary to placate gods of this sort. The bodies they hang in the sacred grove that adjoins the temple. Now this grove is so sacred in the eyes of the heathen that each and every tree in it is believed divine because of the death and putrefaction of the victims. Even dogs and horses hang there with men. *A certain Christian told me that there had been seventy-two bodies suspended all mixed together.*⁵⁶

Bolton argues that the following motifs — the inclusion of humans as well as animals among victims, the use of pagan groves, and the suspension of bodies — must have been influenced by relevant passages in Tacitus and Orosius.⁵⁷ As to the specification of the number and gender of sacrificial victims, they, in his opinion, might have been a local detail. Yet the number 'seventy-two', which loses its significance in Tschan's translation as used by Bolton, does not quite fit the description of the pagan ritual, since a reference to every living being would have implied more than eight species. This discrepancy in numbers probably felt strange soon after the text had been written, and an unknown author added a scholion to this passage explaining that the feast lasted nine days and every day a man and other living beings were sacrificed, so that there were seventy-two *animalia* in total.⁵⁸

As noted by Tschan, the reference to nine heads of each kind bears resemblance to a passage in Genesis 7. 2, in which God orders Noah to take to the ark seven of

⁵⁵ Adam, *Gesta*, IV. 27, pp. 259–60.

⁵⁶ The English translation is from Adam, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. by Tschan, p. 208, with my correction of Tschan's final sentence: 'A Christian seventy-two years old told me that he had seen their bodies suspended promiscuously.' My correction is similar to Trillmich's German translation of this sentence: 'ein Christ hat mir erzählt, er habe 72 solche Leichen ungeordnet nebeneinander hängen sehen'. Adam von Bremen, *Bischofsgeschichte der Hamburger Kirche*, trans. by Werner Trillmich, in *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches*, ed. by Werner Trillmich and Rudolf Buchner (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), pp. 136–503 (p. 473).

⁵⁷ Bolton, 'A Textual Historical Response', p. 75.

⁵⁸ Adam, *Gesta*, Scholion, 141 (137), p. 260.

every kind of clean animal, a male and female, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and female.⁵⁹ Biblical symbolism might have also inspired the use of the number 'seventy-two'. According to Luke 10. 1–10, Jesus sent seventy-two disciples ahead to minister in Judea.⁶⁰ More significantly, based on the list of grandsons of Noah in Genesis 10, patristic authors such as Augustine stated that all humankind was divided into seventy-two nations.⁶¹ A medieval erudite like Adam definitely knew the biblical symbolism of the number 'seventy-two', and hence it is not surprising that this number appeared in his description of the sacred ritual in Uppsala. As mentioned earlier, the Uppsala temple functions in the narrative as the centre of pagan alterity, as the holy place of Gog and Magog. So it is hardly accidental that the number of sacrificial victims offered there matches the number of the nations on the earth, although the exact meaning of this symbolic correspondence remains obscure.

Conclusion

How do these observations in regard to Adam's history relate to the general questions this volume addresses? The first and most obvious conclusion is that Adam's Christian agenda resulted in his active remembrance and reconstruction of past events. This historical reconstruction is based on direct and hidden quotations from and references to biblical and classical sources, and Adam demonstrates ingenuity in his masterful exploitation of both. Furthermore, the two crucial elements of his Christian agenda were an institutional 'missionary Christian identity' and the dramatic plot of the narrative. The first element is expressed in the narrative by presenting Hamburg-Bremen as a New Jerusalem and describing the archbishopric and its flock as the embodiment of Christianity and Christians. The second dramatic element of Adam's agenda is expressed through the presentation of the history of the archbishopric and its northern mission as a constant conflict between Christian Good and pagan Evil. Consequently, this historical narrative is not constructed through the antithesis of the pagan past and the Christian

⁵⁹ 'ex omnibus animantibus mundis tolle septena, septena masculum et feminam, de animantibus vero non mundis duo, duo masculum et feminam'.

⁶⁰ The traditional editions of the Bible use the number 'seventy', while the manuscript evidence favours 'seventy-two'. See *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, rev. edn, 4 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–95), IV, 427.

⁶¹ *De civitate Dei*, XVI. 9–11.

present. These cardinal forces coexist within the narrative temporal space and, albeit with a general trend towards conversion in the narrative, their conflict is expected to be ultimately resolved in the near future. This expectation may well reflect the influence on Adam of some concurrent millennialist ideas, although such a suggestion is difficult to ascertain. These specific elements of Adam's Christian agenda seem to have made his historical narrative quite different from most preceding early medieval narratives in Western Europe and from the narratives written in the twelfth-century northern and eastern peripheries of medieval Europe. More importantly, his agenda was probably quite alien to the first Christian narrators of Scandinavia. They used some historical evidence from Adam's text, but his historical concept hardly appealed to them. It is also noteworthy that the genre of his narrative was not imitated in the Scandinavian mainland. It was only in Iceland that Adam's work might have inspired an anonymous author of *Hungrvaka* to write in the same genre, though in a more modest and conceptually different way.⁶²

⁶² For more details, see Jonas Wellendorf's chapter in this volume.

Part One

Early Scandinavian Historical Narratives in Latin

TWO EARLY TWELFTH-CENTURY VIEWS OF DENMARK'S CHRISTIAN PAST: AILNOTH AND THE ANONYMOUS OF ROSKILDE

Michael H. Gelting

It was not until the first half of the twelfth century that authors in Denmark began writing texts in a historical vein about the Danish past — about a century and a half after Denmark's official Christianization *c.* 963, and more than a century after a general conformity to Christianity had been achieved throughout the kingdom.¹ There was no longer any living memory of the pagan past, neither as a source of information for the authors themselves nor as a frame of reference for their audiences. In fact, it is impossible to tell from their texts whether any traditions about tenth-century Danish pagan culture had survived to their day. Their constructions of a Danish Christian identity were profiled against a background, not of pagan darkness, but rather of a huge void.

This becomes particularly clear if we look at the two earliest chronicles written in Denmark, both from the early twelfth century: Ailnoth's *Gesta Swenomagni regis et filiorum eius et passio gloriosissimi Canuti regis et martyris* (*The Deeds of King Swenomagnus and of his Sons and the Passion of the Most Glorious Canute, King and Martyr*) and the *Chronicle of Roskilde*.² Both texts defy easy classification. Ailnoth's

¹ Michael H. Gelting, 'The Kingdom of Denmark', in *Christianization*, pp. 73–120 (pp. 80–83). Michael H. Gelting, 'Poppo's Ordeal: Courtier Bishops and the Success of Christianization at the Turn of the First Millennium', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 6 (forthcoming).

² Ailnoth, *Gesta*, pp. 77–136. The title of the work occurs in the two earliest manuscripts, both from the beginning of the thirteenth century; Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 77, cf. pp. 45–47. The *Chronicle of Roskilde* is edited as *Chronicon Roskildense*. No medieval title for this chronicle is known.

work is a curious mixture of chronicle and hagiography, while the *Chronicle of Roskilde* is a history of the Danish realm intertwined with a diocesan chronicle.

Ailnoth's Gesta: Historical Background

Ailnoth's *Gesta* is not only the earlier of the two texts, but also the more learned and articulate one. A short presentation of its historical background and a discussion of the author's identity and the date of the text are necessary in order to appreciate the nature of this work. The old Jelling dynasty — descended from Gorm (d. c. 962?), the last pagan king of Denmark, and his son Harald I (c. 962–86/87?), the first Christian king — became extinct in the male line at the death of Harald's great-grandson, Hardeknud (Harthacnut), in 1042. The dynasty not only had united Denmark, but had also ruled England since the Danish conquest of 1013–16, and at times had also held a more uncertain sway over Norway. The end of the dynasty sparked a conflict for mastery over Denmark between the Norwegian king Magnus and his successor Harald on the one side, and on the other side King Hardeknud's cousin Sven II, son of Estrid, who was the sister of Hardeknud's father Cnut II, king of Denmark and England. After initial setbacks, Sven was able to maintain control of Denmark from Magnus's death in 1047 to his own death in 1076. For almost the next sixty years, Sven was succeeded on the Danish throne by five of his sons: Harald III (1076–80), Knud IV (1080–86), Oluf (1086–95), Erik I (1095–1103), and Niels/Nicholas (1104–34).³

Of these five royal brothers, Knud IV came to have a special place in the Danish royal dynasty by becoming the first Danish royal saint and the first Danish saint to be officially canonized by the pope. Already at their father's death in 1076, Knud had attempted to attain the throne instead of his elder brother Harald, but failed. However, when Harald died in 1080, Knud was elected as his successor. His reign is obscure: the hagiographical sources are to some extent mutually contradictory,

³ I refrain from citing the nicknames or epithets by which the medieval kings are usually designated in scholarly literature. Most of these epithets are of dubious authenticity and, moreover, frequently difficult to translate. For informational purposes, King Gorm is usually called 'the Old', Harald I 'Blåtand' (Bluetooth), Cnut II 'the Great' (even though medieval texts prefer to call him 'Gamle-Knud' (Old Knud)), Sven II 'Estridsen' (Son of Estrid, even though the title of Ailnoth's work might suggest 'the Great' as a more authentic epithet), Harald III 'Hén' (Soft Whetstone), Knud IV 'the Holy', Oluf 'Hunger' (Famine), and Erik I 'Ejegod' (Evergood). No epithet is known for King Niels. Similarly, the Norwegian kings Magnus and Harald are usually called 'the Good' and 'Hårderåde' (Hard Rule), respectively.

and there is little other evidence to supplement them. Nevertheless, it does seem plausible that Knud was protecting the still fairly weak Danish church and supporting it both with generous gifts and by attempting to introduce the full payment of tithes, at the same time as he was strengthening his own kingship by enforcing the king's peace. These policies caused resentment in broad sections of the lay aristocracy and the free peasantry.

King Knud's most ambitious project, however, was in foreign policy. In 1085, he assembled a large fleet in the Limfjord in northern Jylland (Jutland), intending to invade England. The intention was no doubt to reclaim the English throne — which his predecessors had held — from William the Conqueror, such as his father had already attempted in the early years of the Conqueror's reign. King William is known to have taken the threat very seriously, but in the end the expedition came to naught. Knud was delayed in Schleswig (*Slesvig*) by a threatening situation on Denmark's southern border, and in the meantime his brother Oluf was engaged in a plot against him. No doubt encouraged by the conspirators, the fleet disbanded. King Knud captured his brother and sent him in fetters to Knud's father-in-law, Count Robert of Flanders, whereupon the King proceeded to levy fines on his disobedient men. It seems likely that this was the incident that triggered the rebellion that broke out in the northernmost province of Jylland, Vendsyssel; yet the deeper causes of the revolt should probably be sought in the widespread dissatisfaction with the King's fiscal and jurisdictional policies. King Knud fled southwards, then east to the island of Fyn (Funen), where the rebels finally caught up with him in the city of Odense. There, he and his few remaining faithful men were massacred in St Alban's Church on 10 July 1086.

Knud was followed on the throne by his enemy brother Oluf, whose reign was marked by a series of crop failures, famines, and epidemics.⁴ The Danish Church interpreted this as God's punishment of the Danish people for its sacrilegious

⁴ *Passio Sancti Kanuti regis et martiris*, c. 8, in *Vitae sanctorum Danorum*, ed. by Martin Clarentius Gertz (Copenhagen: Gad, 1908–12), pp. 62–76 (p. 70): 'Idcirco uindicta dei, correctionis gratia subsecuta, totam fere Daciam tempestate, ferali pestilencia, fame et alimentorum inopia tam diu perturbauit.' According to the *Chronicle of Roskilde* (c. 1138, cf. below), the famine lasted for all of the nine years of Oluf's reign (*Chronicon Roskildense*, c. 11, p. 24). This is likely to be an exaggeration, but a comparison with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* does suggest the occurrence of such dismal conditions immediately after King Knud's murder; the chronicle (text E) mentions severe crop failures, epizootics, and epidemics in England in both 1086 and 1087: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Revised Translation*, ed. by Dorothy Whitelock and others, 2nd edn (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1965), p. 162.

murder of the Church's royal protector.⁵ Although King Oluf is unlikely to have been inclined to see things in such a light, the Danish bishops elevated the murdered King's bones and proceeded to authenticate them as relics by testing them with fire in the spring of 1095; the earliest account leaves no doubt that this was a proper canonization by local ecclesiastic authorities, such as it was still commonly practised in late eleventh-century Europe.⁶ The Danish clergy saw a further confirmation of Knud's sanctity in the death of his enemy King Oluf in August of the same year, and Erik I, Oluf's brother and successor, was an ardent adherent of the new royal cult. Some time between 1095 and 1100, he approached the English king William II (Rufus) and asked him to send twelve Benedictine monks from the abbey of Evesham to Denmark to establish a priory, which became the cathedral chapter of the see of Odense, but whose primary function was to ensure the cult of the new saint.⁷

⁵ For a largely convincing interpretation of the function of Knud's canonization on the background of the Church's precarious position in traditional Danish society in the late eleventh century, see the important thesis of Carsten Breengaard, *Muren om Israels hus: Regnum og sacerdotium i Danmark 1050–1170* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1982), pp. 122–49.

⁶ *Passio Sancti Kanuti*, c. 9, pp. 70–71. This has not been sufficiently recognized in previous Danish research. The matter is treated in depth in Kim Esmark, 'Hellige ben i indviet ild: Den rituelle sanktifikation af kong Knud IV, 1095', in *Gaver, ritualer og konflikter: Ett rettsantropologisk perspektiv på nordisk middelalderhistorie*, ed. by Hans Jacob Orning, Lars Hermanson, and Kim Esmark (Oslo: Unipub, 2010), pp. 161–210. For a short conspectus of the development of the procedures of canonization from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, see André Vauchez, *La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques*, 2nd edn, Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 241 (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1988), pp. 25–37.

⁷ For the date, see the editors' commentary to *DD*, 1st ser., vol. II: 1053–1169, ed. by Lauritz Weibull and Niels Skyum-Nielsen (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1963), no. 24, p. 55. According to the fifteenth-century chronicle of Evesham in London, British Library, MS Harley 3763, the monks were sent to Odense already during the abbacy of Robert, who died in 1096 (*Chronicon abbatis de Evesham, ad annum 1418*, ed. by William Dunn Macray (London: Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1863), p. xlv, n. 1; for the date of the manuscript, see p. xxxvi). William Rufus's agency is only mentioned there, too. As pointed out by the editors of *DD*, 1st ser., II, 24, the authority of this evidence is questionable. However, they seem to have been aware only of the sixteenth-century extracts from MS Harley 3763 in London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian B XV, and they do not appear to have noticed that the number (twelve) of the monks sent to Odense is confirmed by a list of the monks and servants of Evesham from the twelfth or thirteenth century in London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian B XXIV. It is this list that in MS Harley 3763 is dated to the abbacy of Robert (*Chronicon abbatis de Evesham*, ed. by Macray p. xlv, n. 1, cf. pp. xxxv–xxxvi). Both William Rufus's intervention and the number of monks sent to Denmark are plausible, but it seems prudent to agree with *DD*'s editors that the dating of the

Still, the idea of Knud's holiness was far from being unanimously accepted; the rebels were still alive, and they were unwilling to abandon their old grudges.⁸ That may have been one of the reasons why King Erik opened up negotiations with the papacy in order to have his murdered brother's sanctity recognized by the highest authority through the fairly new procedure of papal canonization. He succeeded in this, and in 1100 or 1101 the remains of King Knud were translated to the altar in a new and larger church in Odense.⁹ The official Latinization of the new saint's name was *Canutus*, which in Latin means 'grey-haired'; his hagiographer interpreted this as referring to the maturity of King Knud's understanding and behaviour.¹⁰

As a template for the liturgy of the royal saint, a short and fairly simple *passio* was written at the church of Odense, probably shortly after King Oluf's death in 1095.¹¹

list to Abbot Robert's time may be no more than guesswork by the fifteenth-century compiler. The date 1095 × 1096 for the founding of the priory of Odense is accepted by Peter King, 'The Cathedral Priory of Odense in the Middle Ages', *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger*, 7th ser., 6 (1965–68), 1–20 (p. 3), with reference to Dom David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949), p. 164, n.1; but see Knowles's reservations there.

⁸ Breengaard's arguments for denying the continuous existence throughout the twelfth century of attitudes hostile to Knud's actions as king, although admitting his sanctity because of his repentance in the hour of death, fly in the face of the evidence; Breengaard, *Muren om Israels hus*, pp. 53–56 and 130–31.

⁹ On 19 April 1101 according to Ailnoth, who was present at the ceremony; Ailnoth, *Gesta*, cc. 35–36, pp. 133–34. Most scholars have accepted the argument of P. D. Steidl, 'Hvornaar blev Knud Konge skrinlagt?', *Varden*, 5 (1907), 391–97, that the year 1101 must be wrong, since in that year Good Friday fell on 19 April, and the translation of a saint could not be performed on that day of compunction. Thus the year should be corrected to 1100; e.g. Niels Skyum-Nielsen, *Kvinde og Slave*, Danmarkshistorie uden retouche, 3 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1971), p. 16, cf. p. 12. Steidl's arguments are undeniably strong; yet the emphasis in the first *Passio* of St Knud (c. 1096, cf. below) on the parallels between the King's 'martyrdom' and Christ's death on the cross (M. Cl. Gertz, 'Knud den Helliges Martyrhistorie særlig efter de tre ældste Kilder: En filologisk-historisk Undersøgelse', in *Festskrift udgivet af Københavns Universitet i Anledning af Hans Majestæt Kongens Fødselsdag den 3. Juni 1907* (Copenhagen: [University of Copenhagen], 1907), pp. 70–72) might have encouraged the Danish bishops to stress the analogy by performing the translation on Good Friday. Thus Ailnoth's date might be correct after all.

¹⁰ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, c. 33, p. 131: 'ob sensus caniciem et gestorum maturitatem'. Cf. Georg Søndergaard, 'Canutus – historien om et navn', in *Knuds-bogen 1986: Studier over Knud den Hellige*, ed. by Tore Nyberg and others, Fynske studier, 15 (Odense: Odense Bys Museer, 1986), pp. 157–80 (pp. 158–59).

¹¹ Edited by Gertz in 'Knud den Helliges Martyrhistorie', pp. 6–25 (with parallel Danish translation), and again in *Vitae sanctorum Danorum*, pp. 62–71; these editions improve upon that by

However, after the papal canonization it is likely that the need was felt for a more elaborate and dignified text. That need was met by Ailnoth's *Gesta*.

Ailnoth's Gesta: Its Date and its Author

Of the author's identity, we only know what he tells of himself in his dedicatory letter to King Niels and in the epilogue to the *Gesta*.¹² Both the author's name Ailnoth and his own explicit statements show him to have been an Englishman. He tells that he was from Canterbury, and he also says that at the time of his writing he had been living in Denmark for almost twenty-four years.¹³ Hence the question of his identity is closely connected to the problem of the date of his text.

The current consensus is that Ailnoth must have written his *Gesta* between the accession of King Niels in 1104 and 1117, when Pope Paschal II confirmed the King's privilege to the church of Odense, since Ailnoth's exhortation to the King to show generosity towards his sainted brother's resting place must antedate that privilege.¹⁴ It seems possible to narrow this dating even further. Ailnoth mentions two of King Knud's chaplains as being bishops at the time of his writing. One of them is Arnold, bishop of Roskilde, who died in 1124 or 1125; the other is called Gerold.¹⁵ This Gerold must be identified with Bishop Jareld of Ribe, who

Joannes Baptista Sollerius, *Acta sanctorum*, Julii, 3 (Antwerp, 1723), pp. 121–23, which was based on a faulty transcription of the sole surviving manuscript (cf. *Vitae sanctorum Danorum*, ed. by Gertz, p. 37).

¹² In addition to Ailnoth, *Gesta*, pp. 77–82, the dedicatory letter is edited in *DD*, 1st ser., II, no. 31, pp. 68–73. Epilogue: Ailnoth, *Gesta*, pp. 135–36.

¹³ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 77: 'Ailnothus, Cancia Anglorum metropolitana urbe editus, iam uero Dacie partibus quatuor quinquenniis et bis fere binis annis demoratus'. Cf. Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 135: 'ego [...] Ailnothus, Anglorum orbe editus.'

¹⁴ King Niels's privilege does not carry any date: *DD*, 1st ser., II, no. 32, pp. 73–76 (there dated to 1104–17); Pope Paschal's privilege of 13 October 1117: *DD*, 1st ser., II, no. 42, pp. 88–90. Ailnoth's exhortation to the King: Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 81: 'Tanti igitur germani pignora regia condignis adornet donis potentia, edis sacre decus amplifcet, spiritualis norme uiros cultui ibidem diuino iugiter insistentes solidando corroboret.' The arguments for the currently accepted date of Ailnoth's text are set out in *DD*, ser. I, II, no. 31, commentary p. 69. The date c. 1122 advocated by Ailnoth's translator Hans Olrik and editor Martin Clarentius Gertz may still be encountered occasionally; Hans Olrik, 'Studier over Ælnods skrift om Knud den hellige', *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Danish), 6th ser., 4 (1892–94), 205–91 (p. 205); and Gertz, 'Knud den Helliges Martyrhistorie', p. 84, n. 1.

¹⁵ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 95. For the date of Arnold's death, see Rolf Große, 'Roskildis (Roskilde)', in *Britannia, Scotia et Hibernia, Scandinavia*, vol. II: *Archiepiscopatus Lundensis*, ed. by Helmuth

according to the early thirteenth-century *Chronicle of the Church of Ribe* had sold the possessions of his church and secretly fled with the proceeds.¹⁶ On 6 April 1113, he witnessed a charter of the German emperor Henry V in Worms.¹⁷ As pointed out by Niels Skyum-Nielsen, that day was Easter, when Gerold ought to have been celebrating Mass in his cathedral, and this would seem to indicate that Gerold was in exile in Germany by then.¹⁸ It is unlikely that Ailnoth would have mentioned Gerold's episcopal dignity after his absconding. Thus the *Gesta* may be assumed to have been written before 1113. On the other hand, Ailnoth says that he writes down for posterity what he has learned from credible persons about King Knud's deeds, but he does not claim any personal knowledge of the King's reign.¹⁹ This suggests that he must have arrived in Denmark after the King's murder in 1086. Hence, being in the twenty-fourth year of his stay in Denmark at the time of his writing, Ailnoth could not have written his text earlier than 1110. While admitting that these arguments are somewhat hypothetical, I would thus favour a date for Ailnoth's *Gesta* of around 1111/12.

It is usually assumed that Ailnoth, who calls himself a priest, was attached to the service of the cathedral of Odense and possibly was a monk in St Canute's priory there. However, the arguments for this view do not hold up to closer scrutiny. They are based on a much too literal, sometimes even contrived, reading of

Kluger, *Series episcoporum ecclesiae catholicae occidentalis ab initio usque ad annum MCXCVIII*, ed. by Odilo Engels and Stefan Weinfurter, 6th ser. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1992), pp. 76–95 (p. 84, n. 128).

¹⁶ 'Ribe Bispekrønike', ed. by Ellen Jørgensen, *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger*, 6th ser., 1 (1933–35), 23–33 (p. 27): 'propter regios sumptus possessiones ecclesiae alienavit et collecta pecunia clam discessit'. For the likelihood that this text preserves some authentic traditions about the early bishops of Ribe, see Michael H. Gelting, 'Cronica ecclesiae Ripensis (Chronicle of the Church of Ribe)', in *Medieval Nordic Literature in Latin*, ed. by Lars Boje Mortensen and others (forthcoming); cf. Michael H. Gelting, 'Elusive Bishops: Remembering, Forgetting, and Remaking the History of the Early Danish Church', in *The Bishop: Power and Piety at the First Millennium*, ed. by Sean Gilsdorf, *Neue Aspekte der europäischen Mittelalterforschung*, 4 (Münster: Lit, 2004), pp. 169–200 (p. 184).

¹⁷ 'Geraldus Rifensis [episcopi]', in *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der jetzt die Preussischen Regierungsbezirke Coblenz und Trier bildenden mittelrheinischen Territorien*, vol. I, ed. by Heinrich Beyer (Coblenz: J. Hoelscher, 1860), no. 426, p. 489.

¹⁸ Skyum-Nielsen, *Kvinde og Slave*, p. 31.

¹⁹ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 79: 'quę de gestis religiosi principis et deo dilecti martyris probabilibus personis utriusque sexus et ordinis referentibus agnoui [...] posterorum memorię reseruanda apicibus contradidi'.

Ailnoth's text.²⁰ There is good reason to take a fresh look at A. D. Jørgensen's old hypothesis that Ailnoth might have belonged to the king's chapel.²¹ Jørgensen did not argue this point very closely, but his main argument against Ailnoth having been a monk of Odense is convincing: the way he wrote of the monks of St Canute asking him to compose the saint's life definitely shows him to have seen the monks as a group entirely distinct from himself.²² Jørgensen's argument for Ailnoth's connection to the royal chapel, on the other hand, is incapable of carrying the weight he lays on it: 'diuini officii ministrorum infimus' (the least of the ministers of the Divine service) is not an expression indicating royal service.²³ Although A. D. Jørgensen's idea had been dismissed by later scholars, it was taken up again in 1931 by Ellen Jørgensen (no relation), with the argument that Ailnoth could hardly have gained his thorough knowledge of the laws and governance of Denmark by living as a cloistered monk.²⁴ This argument was not without merit, but it failed to affect the prevailing consensus. Nevertheless, the hypothesis of the two Jørgensens is plausible. The institutional development of the Danish Church was still fairly rudimentary in the early twelfth century, and besides the royal court there were few places susceptible of housing a cleric of Ailnoth's level of education; only the cathedrals of Lund, Roskilde, and Viborg had cathedral chapters, and no Ailnoth is mentioned in what survives of their necrological traditions.²⁵ Moreover, if the monks of Odense were looking for a patron who could broker influence with the

²⁰ The arguments are marshalled in Olrik, 'Studier over Ælnods skrift', pp. 207–09. For Ailnoth's characterization of himself as a priest, see Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 77: 'Diuini officii ministrorum infimus Ailnothus'; p. 135: 'ego sacerdotum infimus Ailnothus'.

²¹ A. D. Jørgensen, *Den nordiske kirkes grundleggelse og første udvikling*, vol. II (Copenhagen: Selskabet for Danmarks Kirkehistorie, 1878), p. 879 with n. ***.

²² Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 79: 'religiosi habitus uiri, Ihesu Christo ibidem insignique triumphatori deseruiantibus, obnixae suffragantibus posterorum memorie reseruanda apicibus contradidi' (at the insistent pleas of the men of religious garb who are serving Jesus Christ and the glorious victor [i.e. St Canute] there, I have committed [St Canute's deeds] into writing in order to preserve them for commemoration by posterity).

²³ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 77; cf. above, note 20.

²⁴ Ellen Jørgensen, *Historieforskning og Historieskrivning i Danmark indtil Aar 1800* (Copenhagen: Den Danske Historiske Forening, 1931), p. 21.

²⁵ The earliest surviving necrology from the cathedral of Lund was begun in 1123: *Necrologium Lundense: Lunds domkyrkas nekrologium*, ed. by Lauritz Weibull (Lund: Berlingska boktryckeriet, 1923). The lost necrology of Roskilde Cathedral was painstakingly reconstructed from early modern excerpts by Alfred Otto, *Liber Daticus Roskildensis: Roskilde Gavebog og Domkapitlets Anniversarieliste* (Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1933). Nothing has survived of the necrological traditions of Viborg Cathedral.

king, they are likely to have turned to someone who already held a position at court. It would not have been unusual for the court of the Danish king to include an exiled Anglo-Saxon cleric: for a decade after the failed rebellions and Danish invasions of England from 1069 to 1071, two high-ranking Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics found exile in Denmark, and they are unlikely to have been alone.²⁶

This might be more than a chance analogy. If I am correct in my hypothesis that Ailnoth wrote *c.* 1111/12 (more precisely, between 1110 and early 1113), and he had been in Denmark for almost twenty-four years at the time, he must have arrived in Denmark between 1086 and 1089. The revolt against King Knud erupted a few months after the King's abortive invasion of England. It is likely that such an ambitious expedition had been prepared through cooperation with sympathizers, agents, and informants in England. Is it possible that the Canterbury priest Ailnoth, whose virulent hatred of the Normans is clear from his writings,²⁷ had been active as a Danish agent, and that he felt his safety in England compromised after the failure of the invasion?

This can be no more than a tantalizing suggestion, and it is better to turn to what we may surmise about his English background. Ailnoth tells that he was from Canterbury.²⁸ If, as I suggest, he arrived in Denmark in the late 1080s, he must have been serving under the Lombard-born Norman Lanfranc, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1070;²⁹ perhaps he had also received his education during Lanfranc's archiepiscopate. Although Lanfranc as archbishop no longer taught personally, he oversaw the cathedral school of Canterbury, making it conform to the model of the school he had created himself at the abbey of Bec in Normandy. Bec came to have an extraordinary influence upon the Anglo-Norman intellectual and political world through the combined effect of its high standards and Lanfranc's influence with William the Conqueror.³⁰ Lacking the necessary philological

²⁶ Timothy Bolton, 'English Political Refugees at the Court of Sveinn Ástriðarson, King of Denmark (1042–1076)', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 15 (2005), 17–36 (pp. 21–30).

²⁷ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, pp. 96–97.

²⁸ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 77: 'Ailnothus, Cancia Anglorum metropolitana urbe editus'.

²⁹ On Lanfranc, see Margaret Gibson, *Lanfranc of Bec* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

³⁰ Gibson, *Lanfranc*, p. 177; Raymonde Foreville, 'L'École du Bec et le "studium" de Canterbury aux XI^e et XII^e siècles', *Bulletin philologique et historique (jusqu'à 1715) du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, 1955–56 (1957), 357–74 (pp. 357–70); Sally N. Vaughn, 'Lanfranc, Anselm and the School of Bec: In Search of the Students of Bec', in *The Culture of Christendom: Essays in Medieval History in Commemoration of Denis L. T. Bethell*, ed. by Marc Anthony Meyer (London: Hambledon, 1993), pp. 155–82.

training for carrying out the close textual analysis that might show the Bec affiliation of Ailnoth's work, I must leave that task to others; but such an affiliation would explain not only Ailnoth's literary ambition — his lofty style, interspersing his prose with verse, and his frequent classical references — but also his focus on history.³¹ At least by the early thirteenth century — the date of the two earliest manuscripts — Ailnoth's text carried the title *The Deeds of King Swen the Great and his Sons and the Passion of the Most Glorious King and Martyr Canute*.³² The prologue — distinct from the dedicatory letter to King Niels — and the first three chapters (in the printed edition nine out of seventy pages)³³ are devoted to the history of Denmark before the accession of the future saint, whereas the usual account of the saint's childhood and education is totally absent. Probably there was not much of edification to tell about the latter subject, but it is remarkable that Ailnoth chose to ignore, rather than to expatiate upon, the earlier *Passion*'s short and stereotypical description of Knud's precocious proficiency in the Christian virtues.³⁴ Ailnoth's St Canute enters the scene as a grown man, a privileged member of his dynasty rather than a person singled out for sainthood from his earliest years.³⁵ The attention and space devoted to the general history of the kingdom is remarkable;³⁶ it seems to reflect the considerable weight placed upon history as a model and norm for future action in the educational tradition of Lanfranc and his successor St Anselm.³⁷

³¹ Cf. N. Lukman, 'Ælnod: Et Bindeled mellem engelsk og dansk Historieskrivning i 12. Aarh.', *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Danish), 11th ser., 2 (1947–49), 493–505.

³² Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 82: 'Incipit proemium in gestis Swenomagni regis et filiorum eius et passione gloriosissimi Canuti regis et martyris.'

³³ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, pp. 82–91.

³⁴ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 63.

³⁵ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 90, in Ailnoth's account of the struggle for the throne between Knud and his elder brother Harald.

³⁶ Cf. the discussion of Ailnoth's *Gesta* as a mixture of hagiography and chronicle in Tue Gad, *Legenden i dansk middelalder* (Copenhagen: Dansk Videnskabs Forlag, 1961), pp. 158–59.

³⁷ Sally N. Vaughn, 'Anselm of Bec: The Pattern of his Teaching', in *Teaching and Learning in Northern Europe, 1000–1200*, ed. by Sally N. Vaughn and Jay Rubenstein, *Studies in the Early Middle Ages*, 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 99–127; Sally N. Vaughn, 'The Concept of Law at the Abbey of Bec, 1034–1136: How Law and Legal Concepts were Described, Taught and Practised at Bec in the Time of Lanfranc and Anselm', in *Law and Learning in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the Second Carlsberg Academy Conference on Medieval Legal History 2005*, ed. by Helle Vogt and Mia Münster-Swendsen (Copenhagen: DJØF, 2006), pp. 167–80.

Thus Ailnoth, while bitterly resenting the destruction of the world of his Anglo-Saxon ancestors, seems to have been deeply influenced by the teachings of the new (Italo-)Norman masters of the English church. Even in exile, he remained a vivid testimony to the woes and contradictions of the profound transformation that English society was going through in the late eleventh century.

Ailnoth's View of Denmark's Christian Past

Hence, while Ailnoth certainly wrote for a wide Danish audience, beginning with King Niels and the Benedictines of Odense, and his long residence in Denmark must have familiarized him thoroughly with the country and its inhabitants, his perspective remained that of a well-educated foreign resident. That is particularly clear in his prologue, where the story of King Sven II and his sons is placed in the grand context first, very briefly, of the conversion of the Roman Empire, and then of a comparative account of the process of conversion in the various Nordic countries. With two exceptions, the comparison is made in general terms, without alluding to specific historical events. Rather, the varying degree of success of the Christianization of the Nordic countries is attributed to geographical factors. The Swedes and the Goths — in Ailnoth's time, these two main components of medieval Sweden were still considered to be separate peoples, and their political union in one kingdom was highly unstable³⁸ — the Norwegians and the Icelanders were slower to adopt the faith because missionaries were reluctant to travel there, due both to the difficulty of obtaining food and provisions and to the wildness and innate hardness of the barbarians. The Danes, by contrast, living closer to the French and the Saxons and in a much more fertile country, had received the faith before any of the other Nordic countries and kept it steadfastly ever since. The number of churches in Denmark grew constantly, and through the power and counsel of the noble Danish kings they were provided with bishops and priests.³⁹

Ailnoth goes on to illustrate the course of Christianization in each country, and this is where his two specific examples are adduced. The Danes' steadfastness in the faith is credited to the ordeal of Bishop Poppo, whereby he proved Christ to be the only true God.⁴⁰ This ordeal took place c. 963 and was first recorded by the Saxon

³⁸ Peter Sawyer, *När Sverige blev Sverige*, trans. and revised by Birgit Sawyer (Alingsås: Viktoria, 1991), pp. 24–63.

³⁹ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, pp. 82–84.

⁴⁰ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 83.

historian Widukind of Corvey some five years afterwards,⁴¹ but in Ailnoth's account, Poppo's original ordeal of carrying a red-hot iron in his hand is doubled by having him also walking unscathed on red-hot iron plates, and Poppo has been promoted from priest to bishop (which he did not become until afterwards).⁴²

The Swedes and the Goths, on the other hand, were as fickle as the Danes were faithful. When their affairs prospered, they would outwardly honour the Christian faith, but when things went wrong — whether it was crop failure, drought, storms, enemy incursions, or conflagrations — they would turn against the Christians and attempt to drive them from the land. As an example of this, Ailnoth mentions the martyrdom of the English missionary Eskillinus, who was killed by the ferocity and insanity of the barbarians.⁴³ This is certainly a reference to the founder of the see of Strängnäs, St Eskil, whose violent death probably occurred during the last major pagan reaction in Sweden, in the 1080s.⁴⁴

Finally, the Norwegians and the Icelanders, Ailnoth has to admit, did keep the Christian faith, but because of the infertility of their lands and the lack of food-stuffs they defiled the fasting days — both weekly and during Lent — by eating illicit food. This prompts Ailnoth to cite (approximately) the prophet Jeremiah: 'From the north shall an evil break forth upon the figure of the entire earth'.⁴⁵ Indeed, Ailnoth sees the coldness of the North reflected in the obstinacy of the Norwegians and the Icelanders in maintaining their old laws and customs even when they were contrary to the Faith and to God's justice. Whereupon, elaborating on the theme of coldness, he concludes his prologue by wishing for the south

⁴¹ Gelting, 'Kingdom of Denmark', p. 80. Gelting, 'Poppo's Ordeal'.

⁴² For the complicated development of the tales about Poppo's ordeal, see Sture Bolin, *Om Nordens äldsta historieforskning: Studier över dess metodik och källvärde*, Lunds universitets årsskrift, n.s., Section 1, 27, 3 (Lund: Håkan Ohlssons boktryckeri, 1931), pp. 63–116; Ailnoth's account is discussed at pp. 69–79, concluding that he was using a lost source that had also been known to Adam of Bremen. Lene Demidoff, 'The Poppo Legend', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 6 (1973), 39–67 (pp. 46–49), argues that Ailnoth was relying on oral tradition rather than on a written text.

⁴³ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 83.

⁴⁴ Nils Blomkvist, *The Discovery of the Baltic: The Reception of a Catholic World-System in the European North (AD 1075–1225)*, The Northern World, 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 601–02; Nils Blomkvist, Stefan Brink, and Thomas Lindkvist, 'The Kingdom of Sweden', in *Christianization*, pp. 167–213 (pp. 183 and 193–95).

⁴⁵ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 84: 'Ab aquilone enim, ut per prophetam dominus commemorat, pandetur malum super faciem uniuersę terrę.' Jeremiah 1. 14: 'et dixit Dominus ad me: ab aquilone pandetur malum super omnes habitatores terrę' (Douay-Rheim's translation: 'And the Lord said to me: from the north shall an evil break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land').

wind of the Song of Songs to bring the warmth of spiritual grace that will chase away the coldness of torpor and iniquity.

The result of this comparison is to draw the boundary between Christian civilization and semi- or pseudo-Christian barbarity exactly at the northern frontier of Denmark. As to when exactly the Danes were included in that civilization, Ailnoth remains rigorously silent. Poppo's ordeal is placed in an indeterminate past, since no mention is made of the king at whose court it took place, Harald I, and the spatial location of the event is just as vague as the temporal reference. Neither does Ailnoth name the 'noble kings' who so decisively furthered the growth of the Church in Denmark. Christianization seems to be placed in an almost mythical, timeless past.

The significance of this obscuring of the chronology of Denmark's Christianization becomes clear when we look at the first chapters following Ailnoth's prologue. The historical narrative begins with the protracted wars for mastery over Denmark between King Sven II on the one hand and, first, King Magnus (the Good) of Norway and Denmark and, after his death in 1047, King Harald (Hardrada) of Norway, ending with the battle of Nissan in 1062.⁴⁶ All of this is still placed in a quasi-mythical, indefinite time and space. No indication of date or duration is provided, and curiously, the two initial adversaries — Magnus of Norway and Sven of Denmark — are described as, respectively, 'duke' (or 'leader') 'of the men of the north and of the west' and 'of the men of the east and of the south'.⁴⁷ The 'men of the north' were Norwegians, obviously, but Ailnoth's use of the term *aquilonales* obscures this identification rather than clarifying it. King Sven's long struggle for his kingdom seems to acquire an almost cosmic dimension. Ailnoth's equally curious error in calling Harald Hardrada by the epithet of the founder of the Norwegian kingdom, Harald Fairhair,⁴⁸ is probably a simple misunderstanding, but it does contribute to the reader's feeling that the historical narrative is emerging from a timeless, mythical past.

Once securely installed on his throne, King Sven is depicted as an ideal Christian ruler, with special weight being placed on his support of the Church and of the poor, promoting the churches that were already in existence and building churches where none had been before, increasing the numbers of the clergy and of the episcopate.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 85.

⁴⁷ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 85: 'conflictus inter Magnum, aquilonalium et occidentalium, et Suegnonem, Magnum etiam nuncupatum, orientalium et australium ducem'.

⁴⁸ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 85: 'Haroldum coma pulchrum'.

⁴⁹ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, pp. 85–86.

Ailnoth compares him both to the biblical King David⁵⁰ and to the Homeric King Priam of Troy;⁵¹ the latter parallel may have been inspired by the large number of King Sven's offspring by various women, a feature he shared with the Trojan king. Sven's inordinate appetite for women is the only openly critical note that Ailnoth introduces into his portrait of the King.⁵² In the middle of his account of King Sven, the author inserts a rather lengthy disquisition on salvation, the main point of which is that only he who despairs of salvation and of the remission of his sins is irremediably, eternally damned. It does not appear to have reference to any element of Ailnoth's portrait of Sven, nor to any known episode in the King's life. Rather, this piece of moral theology should be seen as intimately connected to the comparison between King Sven and the biblical King David that follows immediately upon it: even though Sven II was described as an ideal king, he was still, like David, a sinful soul and no saint; yet, like David against Goliath, King Sven fought the good battle against the forces of the Antichrist.⁵³ At the same time, it may have been intended that King Sven's David-like figure be interpreted as an allegorical prefiguration of St Canute and his Christ-like death, just as King David in the Bible was interpreted as a prefiguration of Christ.⁵⁴

Finally, King Sven's name in Ailnoth's text merits some attention. Upon his first mention of the King, Ailnoth calls him 'Sven, also called Magnus',⁵⁵ thereby making it clear that this was a case of the double naming that seems to have been frequent in eleventh- and twelfth-century Denmark — the child receiving a traditional, indigenous name at birth and a Christian name at baptism.⁵⁶ However, after that initial explanation Ailnoth invariably calls Sven '*Svenomagnus*', thus conflating the two names into one, with the similarity to the designation of the first Frankish emperor as Charlemagne probably being intentional. Thus this 'Sven the Great' is depicted as the founding father of the Danish kingdom, and his

⁵⁰ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 88.

⁵¹ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 85.

⁵² Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 89: 'luxui illecebrosi appetitus admodum cedens numerosę prolis sobolem in regni sibi iura successuram emisit'.

⁵³ This parallel is drawn out explicitly and at length; Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 88.

⁵⁴ For all of this interpretation, see Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, 'Om Ælnoth og hans bog', in *Ælnoths Krønike*, trans. and comm. by Erling Albrechtsen (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1984), pp. 115–39 (pp. 130–31).

⁵⁵ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 85: 'Suegnonem, Magnum etiam nuncupatum'.

⁵⁶ Johannes Steenstrup, 'Dobbelte Navne: Erik Lam—David', *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Danish), 6th ser., 4 (1892–94), 729–41.

foundational role seems to be stressed by Ailnoth providing an exact date for his death, the fourth of the Kalends of May 1074.⁵⁷ We have now moved from mythical to historical time.

In the following chapter, Ailnoth does not attempt to conceal that King Sven's succession was contested between his eldest son Harald and another son, Knud, the future St Canute. Simply, Knud's defeat is described as a voluntary withdrawal in the interest of peace and as part of God's plans for the future saint.⁵⁸ Thereafter, the account of the short reign of Harald III is centred upon his legislative activity. This is described in these terms:

Haroldus patrium nactus imperium populi uotis admodum fauere eisque leges et iura non tam, quæ uellent, eligere, immo, quæ uel quales elegissent, posteris seruandas regali studebat auctoritate decernere.⁵⁹

[Harald took care [...] not only to choose for [the people] such laws and rights as they wanted, but rather to decree by royal authority that those laws and rights which they chose should be kept for future generations.]

The Danes still in Ailnoth's time required from candidates to the throne that they should confirm the laws that had been sanctioned by King Harald, who himself was held in high esteem as 'the provider of public peace and freedom'.⁶⁰ After Sven the Great, the founder of the Danish church, his son Harald thus was the founder of Danish law.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to analyse the subsequent, main part of Ailnoth's text, the *Life of St Canute*, properly speaking. By now, the point of his

⁵⁷ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 89. From Ailnoth the dating of King Sven's death to 1074 went on to all of the medieval historical writing in Denmark, and for a long time it was also commonly accepted by modern Danish historians. However, contemporary Anglo-Saxon chronicles have 1076 as the year of Sven's death, whereas Ailnoth was writing almost forty years later. Nowadays most Danish historians have accepted 1076 as the correct year. The arguments for this view were marshalled already by Johannes Steenstrup, 'I hvilket Aar døde Svend Estridsøn?', *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Danish), 6th ser., 4 (1892–94), 722–29. For the subsequent acrimonious debate, see references in Otto, *Liber daticus Roskildensis*, p. 169; and Aksel E. Christensen, 'Tiden 1042–1241', in *Danmarks historie*, ed. by Aksel E. Christensen and others, vol. 1: *Tiden indtil 1340* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1977), pp. 211–399 (pp. 236–37) — both adhering to 1074.

⁵⁸ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 90.

⁵⁹ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, pp. 90–91.

⁶⁰ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 91: 'Unde leges ab eo sancitas Dani usque in hodiernum ab electis et eligendis sibi regibus expetunt, eumque ueluti pacis ac libertatis publicæ prouisorem pro concessis ab eo legibus laude et fauoribus extollunt.'

semi-mythical interpretation of Denmark's early Christian history should stand out reasonably clearly. It is important to remember that the old royal dynasty, usually called the Jelling dynasty after its tenth-century place of burial and commemoration, had become extinct in the male line with the death of King Hardeknud of Denmark and England in 1042. Sven II, who succeeded him after the short-lived Norwegian takeover under Magnus, was Hardeknud's cousin, being the son of Cnut/Knud II's sister. Sven was the origin of a new royal male line. What Ailnoth was achieving with his total obliteration of the memory of the Jelling dynasty, including that of Harald I, the king who claimed to have converted the Danes in the 960s, was to legitimize the new dynasty by portraying its first two kings as the real founding fathers of civilized Denmark, in almost archetypal roles.⁶¹ Ailnoth cast St Canute himself in a no less archetypal role, that of protomartyr, drawing explicit parallels between the King's death and the stoning of St Stephen, the first Christian martyr.⁶² Ailnoth may even have conceived of his audience seeing a trinitarian allegory in the first three kings of the dynasty: the father, Sven (whom Ailnoth likened to King David), founding the Christian kingdom; the son, Harald, giving it new laws; and St Canute reaching the level of the spirit by attaining martyrdom and sainthood.

In all of this, nothing whatsoever was told about the pagan past that went before Christianization. Only the very first sentence of Ailnoth's prologue explicitly tells that the Nordic realms once were pagan.⁶³ However, since this is followed immediately by the author's short reference to Rome's conquests and the subsequent conversion of its empire, it seems to include the North in a common, ancient

⁶¹ Cf. Meulengracht Sørensen, 'Om Ælnoth og hans bog', pp. 120–24; Nanna Damsholt, 'Tiden indtil 1560', in *Danmarks historie*, ed. by Søren Mørch, vol. x: *Historiens historie* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1992), pp. 11–51 (pp. 21–23).

⁶² Ailnoth, *Gesta*, pp. 97–98: 'omnia disponens et cuncta diiudicans [i.e. God] [...] Danis de principe patronum, de rege prothomartyrem efficere disponebat'. The explicit parallels to St Stephen Protomartyr are at pp. 107 and 118. St Canute was already called protomartyr in the earlier *Passio: Vitae sanctorum Danorum*, ed. by Gertz, p. 60. Both authors conveniently forget the earlier canonization of St Theodgar of Vestervig. On the importance of St Stephen Protomartyr also in the legends of the holy kings of Norway and Hungary, St Olav and St Stephen, see Lars Boje Mortensen, 'Sanctified Beginnings and Mythopoietic Moments: The First Wave of Writing on the Past in Norway, Denmark, and Hungary, c. 1000–1230', in *Making of Christian Myths*, pp. 247–73 (pp. 262–63).

⁶³ Ailnoth, *Gesta*, p. 82: 'Regna aquilonis, in remotis mundi partibus abdita, longe diuque paganis tenebantur ritibus dedita, quousque ea de profundo erroris et infidelitatis diuina extraxit clementia.'

paganism rather than indicating anything specific about the past beliefs of the Nordic peoples. If the first century of Denmark's Christian history was reduced to a semi-mythical, timeless past, the old Nordic paganism was tacitly relegated to limbo. Denmark's history was emphatically a Christian history, and nothing but that.

The Chronicle of Roskilde and its View of Denmark's Christian Past

The same conclusion emerges from a consideration of the second text that I want to introduce here, if in less detail. It is the *Chronicle of Roskilde*, written around 1138 by an author whose name is unknown, but who was certainly a canon of the cathedral chapter of Roskilde.⁶⁴ It is the earliest chronicle to have been preserved from medieval Denmark, and we may be fairly sure that it was also the first to have been written: it does not show any trace of its author having used native narrative sources or any other written sources from Denmark apart from the archives of Roskilde Cathedral and, probably, the 'house tradition' of the cathedral chapter. Until the 1070s, when the cathedral chapter was founded⁶⁵ and its archives began, the anonymous author of Roskilde based his account of Danish history essentially upon the historical narrative of Adam of Bremen.⁶⁶ Only in expanding Adam's limited information on the Viking raids in England in the ninth century did the

⁶⁴ Michael H. Gelting, 'Chronicon Roskildense', in *Medieval Nordic Literature in Latin*, ed. by Mortensen and others; *Roskildekroniken*, trans. and comm. by Michael H. Gelting, 2nd edn (Højbjerg: Wormianum, 2002); and Michael H. Gelting, 'Da Eskil ville være ærkebiskop af Roskilde: Roskildekroniken, *Liber daticus Lundensis* og det danske ærkesædes ophævelse 1133–1138', in *Ett annat 1100-tal: Individ, kollektiv och kulturella mönster i medeltidens Danmark*, Centrum för Danmarksstudier, 3 (Göteborg: Makadam, 2004), pp. 181–229 (pp. 181–202); Anne K. G. Kristensen, *Danmarks eldste Annalistik: Studier over lundensisk Annalskrivning i 12. og 13. Århundrede*, Skrifter udgivet af Det historiske Institut ved Københavns Universitet, 3 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1969), pp. 39–41 and 121–26. For a severely critical overview of earlier interpretations of the *Chronicle of Roskilde*, see Breengaard, *Muren om Israels hus*, pp. 51–72.

⁶⁵ J. O. Arhnnung, *Roskilde Domkapitels Historie*, vol. 1: *Tiden indtil 1416 med Altrenes og Kapellernes Historie* (Roskilde: Erh. Flensborg, 1937), pp. 4–5, showed conclusively that the chapter must have been in existence before the death of King Sven II in 1076 (not 1074 as assumed by Arhnnung, cf. above). Arhnnung's arguments pp. 6–7 for the existence of a cathedral chapter since the creation of the see in the early 1020s are unsubstantiated; the founding of the chapter is likely to have been connected to a large donation by King Sven's mother Estrid 1072 × 1075 (*DD*, 1st ser., II, no. 9, pp. 18–19; there dated 1072 × 1073 on the assumption that King Sven died in 1074).

⁶⁶ For more details on this text, see the previous chapter by Ildar Garipzanov.

chronicler draw extensively upon other sources, of which the most important one seems to have been Henry of Huntingdon's *History of the English People*.⁶⁷

However dependent on Adam of Bremen for his facts, the anonymous author of Roskilde was no faithful abbreviator. On the contrary, his short chronicle may even be called 'anti-Adam' insofar as the period covered by Adam of Bremen is concerned. Master Adam wrote in the 1070s, when the fortunes of the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen were at a low ebb: Archbishop Adalbert's short flirtation with the highest reaches of power as a tutor of the young German king Henry IV had ended in defeat and humiliation, and the episcopal city of Bremen itself was the target of attacks by neighbouring enemies; the recently created suffragan sees among the western Slavs had collapsed during a great Slavic rebellion; and the archbishop's authority over the Danish bishops, let alone those of Sweden or Norway, was hardly more than a sham, being in practice entirely dependent upon the good will of the kings. Adam's work was a remarkable reinterpretation of history in order to stress the archbishopric's paramount role in spreading the Faith among the Scandinavians and the Slavs and its continuous exercise of its authority over the wide missionary field that had belonged to it since its foundation. It was the vindication of the prestige of the archbishops in the face of serious challenges to their see's authority, potentially even to its survival as a separate archdiocese.⁶⁸

In contrast, the *Chronicle of Roskilde* was written at the end of a short, fleeting moment of revival of Hamburg-Bremen's authority over the Danish church. In 1103, Pope Paschal II had promoted the Danish diocese of Lund to the archiepiscopal dignity, with authority over all of the Nordic countries. As might be expected, the archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen did not acquiesce passively to this radical diminishing of their province, and during the following half-century they made repeated attempts at having Paschal's decision reversed. In 1133, the particular circumstances of the German king Lothar III's support of Pope Innocent II during the Anacletan schism enabled the Archbishop of Hamburg to obtain papal letters renewing the subjection of Lund and the rest of the Nordic dioceses to the

⁶⁷ Gelting, 'Chronicon Roskildense'. Henry of Huntingdon's chronicle is edited in Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*, ed. by Diana Greenway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

⁶⁸ Gelting, 'Elusive Bishops'. The interpretation of the chronicle as a conscious 'anti-Adam' was first proposed by Lars Hemmingsen, 'By Word of Mouth: The Origins of Danish Legendary History. Studies in European Learned and Popular Traditions of Dacians and Danes before A.D. 1200' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Copenhagen, 1996), esp. pp. 260–62.

metropolitan authority of Hamburg-Bremen. This decision must have taken full effect upon the death of the old Archbishop Asser of Lund in May 1137. Within a year of that event, however, both Lothar — now emperor — and the antipope Anaclet II were dead, and uncertainty about the succession in Germany temporarily freed Pope Innocent from his dependency upon the German ruler. One result thereof was his tacit abrogation of his decision of 1133, by conceding the pallium to Archbishop Asser's successor in the see of Lund, Eskil, in the summer of 1138.⁶⁹

The negotiations terminating the conflict about the election to the see of Lund between Eskil and the cathedral chapter's choice, Bishop Rico of Schleswig, are precisely the last events recorded in the original part of the *Chronicle of Roskilde*. However, it is likely that the writing of the chronicle was begun somewhat earlier, that is, during the time when the abolition of Lund's metropolitan status was in full effect. Hence, it must have been written under the auspices of Bishop Eskil of Roskilde, the man who in 1138 succeeded to the archiepiscopal see of Lund. The particular way in which the anonymous chronicler used Adam of Bremen's work should be seen in the context of the wish of the Danish church in general to regain its status as a separate metropolitan province independent of Hamburg-Bremen, and in particular of Bishop Eskil's ambition to follow his uncle Asser in the archiepiscopal dignity.⁷⁰

The chronicler of Roskilde subverted Adam's message of the paramount role of the see of Hamburg-Bremen in the Christian mission to the north by stitching bits and pieces from Adam together into a picture of a Danish kingdom that had essentially been governed by Christian kings since the exiled King Harald (Klæk) was baptized in Mainz in 826. Significantly, while the chronicler took the account of this foundational event from Adam, he emphasized that the Danish king was baptized by Archbishop Otgar of Mainz; this piece of information is found neither in Adam nor in the Frankish annals upon which Adam drew at this point. The chronicler of Roskilde must have had access to some annalistic source in order to know the year of this event, which he could not have derived from Adam. However, it seems impossible to tell whether that source also mentioned Archbishop

⁶⁹ Gelting, 'Da Eskil ville være ærkebiskop af Roskilde', pp. 184–97.

⁷⁰ Gelting, 'Da Eskil ville være ærkebiskop af Roskilde', pp. 197–202. My hypothesis there, that the chronicle was written in support of a re-erection of the Danish metropolitan see, but in Roskilde instead of Lund, has not gained acceptance in Danish scholarship; Stefan Pajung, review of *Ett annat 1100-tal*, ed. by Peter Carelli and others, in *Historie: Jyske Samlinger*, 2003, pp. 479–82. This point is of secondary importance in the present context.

Otgar's role, or if the chronicler combined his annalistic source with a list of the archbishops of Mainz.⁷¹ To him, the essential point seems to have been to stress that the first Christian Danish king did not owe his baptism to an archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen. The chronicler did not omit the fact that, at least according to Adam, several of the subsequent Danish kings were baptized by archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen,⁷² nor did he entirely suppress Adam's mentions of the expulsion of priests and the destruction of churches upon the accession of new kings who were inimical to Christianity;⁷³ nevertheless, all of these enemies of the Faith were invariably converted and baptized, so that the overall impression is that of a kingdom which had been ruled continuously by Christian kings since the baptism of King Harald in 826 at Mainz, hence without assistance from Hamburg, and in fact even before the founding of the episcopal see there. The continuity of Christian kingship in Denmark for three centuries since 826 must have been a potential argument against Hamburg-Bremen's pretensions to exercise a missionary authority towards Denmark still in the 1130s.

The *Chronicle of Roskilde* is not a strikingly subtle work. Its style is pedestrian, and in assembling his material from different parts of Adam's chronicle and from other sources, the anonymous author tended to proceed cumulatively rather than synthetically. Hence the sequence of the first three kings of the Jelling dynasty — Gorm, Harald, and Sven — turns up twice, even with both Haralds reigning for fifty years each; a side-effect hereof is that poor King Ethelred the 'Redeless' of Wessex is multiplied into three different persons.⁷⁴

Under these circumstances, a close analysis of the chronicle like the one I have attempted here for Ailnoth's text is not a particularly promising prospect. However, if we look for the representation of paganism in the *Chronicle of Roskilde*, the result is much the same as for the *Life of St Canute*. The history of the Danish

⁷¹ *Chronicon Roskildense*, c. 1, p. 14. Adam, *Gesta*, I. 15, p. 21. Otgar was archbishop of Mainz from 826 to 847. It is not clear on what grounds Albert Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, vol. II (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1890), p. 693, claimed that Archbishop Otgar of Mainz performed the baptism; the Archbishop's intervention is not mentioned in any of the sources cited by Hauck in n. 7 to p. 692.

⁷² *Hericus Puer* (ninth century), *Chronicon Roskildense*, c. 2, p. 15; *Frothi* (legendary king, presumably during the archiepiscopate of Unni of Hamburg-Bremen, 919–36; not mentioned by Adam), *Chronicon Roskildense*, c. 4, p. 17; Harald I and his son Sven, *Chronicon Roskildense*, c. 5, p. 18; Knud (Cnut), *Chronicon Roskildense*, c. 7, p. 20.

⁷³ *Hericus Puer*, *Chronicon Roskildense*, c. 2, p. 15.

⁷⁴ *Chronicon Roskildense*, cc. 4–7, pp. 17–20.

kingdom and church begins with the first Christian king; whatever might have gone before him is entirely obliterated. How several of his successors could initially have been enemies of Christianity is not explained. Some of them are described as 'most cruel' or 'fierce', but strictly speaking none of them is explicitly characterized as a pagan.⁷⁵ Just as in Ailnoth's account, the pagan past is entirely relegated to oblivion.

A General Denial of the Pagan Past

This total suppression of the pagan past appears to have been a general phenomenon in twelfth-century Denmark. This does not mean that no tales were being told of kings and events belonging in the pre-Christian centuries. In the eleventh century, according to Adam of Bremen, King Sven II still knew a fairly detailed tradition reaching back to the early tenth century,⁷⁶ and at least part of this lore was still available to the great late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century chroniclers Sven Aggesen and Saxo Grammaticus.⁷⁷ However, if we believe Saxo's statements in his preface, they were dependent upon Icelandic rather than native tradition for such tales.⁷⁸ There is independent evidence of tales that were circulating about ancient legendary kings in the curious text usually called the *Chronicle of Lejre*, which is likely to have been written in the late twelfth century, and which is preserved as part of the late thirteenth-century *Annals of Lund*.⁷⁹ Its series of legendary kings is largely in accordance with Saxo's, although the latter fleshed out his

⁷⁵ *Hericus Puer, Chronicon Roskildense*, c. 2, p. 15: 'Ad quem ueniens sanctus Ansgarius [...] crudelem tyrannum de feroci leone mansuetissimum conuertit in agnum'; Gorm, *Chronicon Roskildense*, c. 5, p. 18: 'Gorm, crudelissimus rex'.

⁷⁶ The first time Adam quotes King Sven as his source is in mentioning some obscure Danish kings, who may be dated roughly around 900; Adam, *Gesta*, I. 48, p. 48. Adam claims that King Sven remembered all the deeds of the barbarians as if they had been written: Adam, *Gesta*, II. 43, p. 103.

⁷⁷ Aggesen, *Brevis historia*; Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum* — *Danmarkshistorien*, ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen, Danish trans. by Peter Zeeberg, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab & Gad, 2005), written c. 1185–1215.

⁷⁸ Saxo, *Gesta Danorum*, ed. by Friis-Jensen, Praefatio 1. 4, pp. 74–76; Saxo also claims to have translated ancient heroic poetry from runic inscriptions (Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, ed. by Friis-Jensen, Praefatio. 1. 3, p. 74), but that tells more about his imagination than about his learning.

⁷⁹ *Chronicon Lethrense de antiquissimis Danie regibus*, ed. by M. Cl. Gertz in *SMHD*, I, 43–53. The chronicle is stylistically dependent on the *Chronicle of Roskilde*.

account with numerous other kings from other traditions. However, the tales about those kings in the *Chronicle of Lejre* frequently differ from the ones in Saxo's history, and some of them smack definitely more of folktales than of epic poetry. They may possibly reflect a native tradition.

Thus we have substantial fragments of a rich and diversified tradition about pre-Christian times that was still alive and well in twelfth-century Denmark. Nevertheless, even in these tales any mentioning of the paganism of the legendary kings was studiously avoided. Saxo did mention the gods of the old Nordic pantheon, but characteristically he euhemerized them into mortal kings who by their artful deception made people believe that they were gods.⁸⁰

Right from the beginning of historical writing in Denmark in the early twelfth century, the memory of the old pagan religion was most effectively suppressed. There was no attempt to contrast the old and the new religion: Danish history was exclusively and emphatically a Christian history. Tales were still being told of legendary kings who could not possibly have been Christian; but their pagan beliefs — even the very notion that the Danes had once adhered to a pagan religion — were lost in a resounding void.

This total silence may perhaps contribute towards explaining the remarkable lack of interest in missionary saints in medieval Denmark. The great missionary saint of the see of Hamburg-Bremen, Ansgar, did occur in the liturgical calendar at least in some Danish dioceses, but his cult does not seem to have been prominent;⁸¹ and even in the legends about Denmark's only 'indigenous' missionary saint, the obscure St Theodgar of Vestervig, the pagan cult which he presumably must have opposed is curiously absent.⁸²

Both of the authors examined in the present chapter made an important contribution towards this loss of historical memory. Each of them reinterpreted the past in order to make it fit the needs of his time. For Ailnoth — in all likelihood a courtier cleric — one major goal was to enhance the legitimacy and prestige of the

⁸⁰ Saxo, *Gesta Danorum*, ed. by Friis-Jensen, 1. 7. 1–7. 3, pp. 112–14 (Odin); 3. 1. 1–4. 13, pp. 190–210 (Høder, Balder, and Odin).

⁸¹ Ellen Jørgensen, *Helgendyrkelse i Danmark: Studier over Kirkekultur og kirkeligt Liv fra det 11te Aarhundredes Midte til Reformationen* (Copenhagen: Hagerup, 1909), p. 9. I am grateful to Dr Knud Ottosen for information about the occurrence of St Ansgar in Danish liturgical calendars.

⁸² *Sanctus Theodgarus confessor*, in *Vitae sanctorum Danorum*, ed. by Gertz, pp. 3–26. Theodgar was born in Thuringia, but educated in England, and he had served the Norwegian king Olav Tryggvason (995–1000). After the latter's death, he settled in Thy in northernmost Jylland as a missionary.

ruling dynasty. As a result, not only was the old paganism radically effaced, but even the actual process of conversion was relegated to an indeterminate, semi-mythical past. Ailnoth drastically foreshortened Denmark's Christian history, identifying it essentially with the history of King Sven II and his sons. The chronicler of Roskilde, inversely, strove to extend the Christian history of Denmark as far back as possible in order to delegitimize Hamburg-Bremen's claim to exercise metropolitan authority over the Danish church. This authorial strategy was no less efficient than Ailnoth's, not only in avoiding any mention of the ancient pagan cult, but also in totally confusing the memory of the Christianization of Denmark.

These attitudes appear to have been typical of the first generation of historical and hagiographic writers in the recently converted kingdoms in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. To them, it was vitally important to affirm their country's and their people's Christian credentials. Subsequent writers — in Denmark represented by Sven Aggesen, Saxo, and the anonymous author of the *Chronicle of Lejre* — could take a new interest in the pre-Christian past of their nation.⁸³ Yet even in their accounts, the old paganism remained almost invisible.

If we listen to the Danish voices of the early twelfth century, the Danish people that was converted in the past was godless rather than heathen, ignorant rather than adhering to a pagan religion.

⁸³ Cf. Mortensen, 'Sanctified Beginnings and Mythopoietic Moments', pp. 259–62 and 269.

HISTORIA NORWEGIE AND SVEN AGGESEN:
TWO PIONEERS IN COMPARISON

Lars Boje Mortensen

When I began reading medieval Norwegian works of history some fifteen years ago, I was startled to find that the nice little Latin booklet written about 1180 by Theodoricus Monachus had not been compared to its obvious Danish counterpart, the huge Latin volume by Saxo Grammaticus. Both authors projected a pioneering spirit; they had produced the first works of their kind — a survey of national history framed by Latin learning acquired in northern France. They were contemporaries, and they were both in all probability canons, each working for his own archbishop; they were also both highly interested in how the past of their own nation fitted into the greater scheme of biblical and Roman history. At that time, I published an article in which I drew attention to a number of similarities between the two — in spite of the obvious difference in scope and ambition.¹ More specifically, I pointed to twelfth-century learning as the basis for their works and to their shared interest in Roman history. Theodoricus was explicitly referring to the model value that Roman history had for understanding the Norwegian past; for instance, by explaining the late baptism of King Olav Haraldsson (who converted the Norwegians) with the even later baptism of the Christian emperor, Constantine. Saxo's way of presenting the Danes as Romans was more indirect and elaborate, but the point was simply to

¹ Lars Boje Mortensen, 'Det 12. århundredes renæssance i Norge: Teoderik munk og Romerriget', in *Antikken i norsk litteratur*, ed. by Øivind Andersen and Asbjørn Aarseth, Skrifter, 4 (Bergen: Det norske institutt i Athen, 1993), pp. 17–35. On Theodoricus Monachus, see Sverre Bagge's contribution in the present volume with further references.

show that both authors played on the Roman past as a natural point of departure for their respective first attempts at conceptualizing local history.

This chapter will deal with the first national histories of Denmark and Norway in a similar comparative way, but will discuss two entirely different and less-known Latin works: the anonymous *Historia Norwegie* and Sven Aggesen's *Short History of the Kings of Denmark*. The following discussion will also offer some lessons in regard to the representativity of our earliest preserved chronicles: were there in fact other smaller historical works in twelfth-century Scandinavia besides those that have survived to the present day? This question relates to the more general issue of the nature of Nordic elite discourse on the national past towards the end of the twelfth century: was the work put into the formation of this discourse — of which our surviving chronicles are symptomatic — intended for purposes external or internal to the elite who produced it?

Historia Norwegie

The anonymous work *Historia Norwegie* (or rather, *Historia Norwagensium*, History of the Norwegians) has come to us as only a torso. What we have is the first part, comprising a prologue, a geographical introduction, and the first book of historical narrative — all in all about twenty-five pages in a modern edition.² The text brings us to the year 1015, when Olav Haraldsson — the later saint — returned from England to seize the throne of Norway and to begin converting the Norwegians. As the author promises to treat kings and the status of conversion up to his own day (some time in the later twelfth century), we can assume that at least a second book was written, and perhaps even more, allowing for the well-known mechanism of broadening the narrative as one approaches contemporary events. The original thus ran to at least fifty pages, but may easily have exceeded a hundred.

Among the most important features of the text as we know it is a learned geographical introduction clearly expanding upon and correcting the one given by Adam of Bremen a century earlier. In various ingenious ways, the Norwegian lands and the North Sea islands are described by our author in terms that connote the sacred space of biblical geography and the imperial space of the Roman *mare*

² *Historia Norwegie*. Another English translation, by Devra Kunin, came out in 2001 in *A History of Norway and The Passion and Miracles of the Blessed Óláfr*, ed. by Carl Phelpstead (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2001), with substantial notes by Phelpstead.

nostrum.³ In this connection, we are given an elaborate account of a shamanic séance among the pagan Sami — no doubt to emphasize the presence of paganism in the Norwegian realm and of the very real missionary duties of Norwegian kings and bishops even in the late twelfth century. The subsequent genealogy of Norwegian kings has also attracted much scholarly attention, as this seems to be the first written version of the lineage of the so-called Ynglinga kings, which plays an important role in later vernacular texts. Finally, the narrative opens up with a glorification of the two missionary Olavs, Tryggvason and Haraldsson, the former preparing for the latter as John the Baptist paved the way for Christ. The style of the work is more complex than that of Theodoricus's *History*; in terms of scope as well as level of elaboration, the *Historia Norwegie* seems to have been a more ambitious undertaking.

How do we know that the *Historia Norwegie* was actually the first comprehensive history of Norway? Well, simply put, we do not know. While it is uncontroversial that Theodoricus wrote his work around 1180, the best we can say with similar confidence about the *Historia Norwegie* is that it dates from the second half of the twelfth century (and was composed in an uncertain place — a point to which I shall return). In addition, there are arguments that favour a date in the 1160s or 1170s, which would then make the *Historia Norwegie* (rather than Theodoricus's work) a pioneering text.⁴ That both authors felt like pioneers is clear; and they believed this in good faith, as there are no signs whatsoever that they knew of each other.

Sven Aggesen

For the Danish text of Sven Aggesen, we are, by contrast, almost pampered with information: we know the author (and another work by him) and the date of the text, which has survived in its entirety.⁵ Sven's ancestors belonged to the highest

³ I have given a closer analysis of the geographical discourse in Lars Boje Mortensen, 'The Language of Geographical Description in Twelfth-Century Scandinavia', *Filologia mediolatina*, 12 (2005), 103–21.

⁴ See *Historia Norwegie*, pp. 11–24.

⁵ Aggesen, *Brevis historia*, pp. 94–141, in two separate versions. I am quoting from the superior X-version, which is also used in the Danish and English translations: *Sven Aggesøns historiske Skrifter*, trans. by Martin Clarentius Gertz (Copenhagen: Det Schønbergske Forlag, 1916–17), and *The Works of Sven Aggesen, Twelfth-Century Danish Historian*, trans. by Eric Christiansen (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1992); in his introduction (pp. 1–4) and appendix (pp. 141–45), Christiansen also gives the best account of Sven's life, works, and family.

echelon of Danish society; his grandfather and father had been elite warriors of heroic reputation, and his uncle was none other than Denmark's second archbishop, Eskil (1138–78). Like his younger contemporary Saxo, Sven must have studied in northern France — this is generally assumed from his exquisite learning. His other work, *Lex castrensis* (*The Law of the Retainers*), reveals his legal training as well as his identification with the military ethos of his family. He seems to have become archdeacon at the cathedral chapter of Lund, and thus wrote from a very central and high position both institutionally and in terms of family. His literary work cannot be interpreted as that of a servant or a mouthpiece of the king, Church, or aristocracy; he should rather be seen as the creative voice of an elite class that had branched out into royal and ecclesiastical functions (see further below concerning this aspect).⁶

Sven Aggesen's *Short History of the Kings of Denmark* spans Danish history from the mythical king Skjold — the ancestry also known from Beowulf, the Scyldings (Skjoldunger) — up to 1185, when the Danish king Knud VI, son of the recently deceased Valdemar the Great, forced the Pomeranian duke Bugislav to pay him tribute and homage (incidentally this is the same triumphal juncture at which Saxo would later conclude his Danish history). Scholars usually agree that Sven must have written just after this event.⁷

It is a well-composed and charming little narrative of about twenty-five pages written in a modern — which is to say a somewhat difficult and manneristic — Latin. The first seven chapters deal with pre-Christian kings and the remaining thirteen with the Christian period from Harald Bluetooth to Sven's own time. A few striking features deserve to be mentioned. Two episodes from the pagan past receive special attention through Sven's narrative skills, including a brilliant oratory on the part of the protagonists. One episode is the story of the desperate old

⁶ Cf. *Works of Sven Aggesen*, ed. by Christiansen, p. 4; on the elite and literature, see also Lars Boje Mortensen, 'The Nordic Archbishoprics as Literary Centres around 1200', in *Archbishop Absalon of Lund and his World*, ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen and I. Skovgaard-Petersen (Roskilde: Roskilde Museum, 2000), pp. 133–57.

⁷ Cf. *Sven Aggesens historiske Skrifter*, trans. by Gertz, p. xiv; and *Works of Sven Aggesen*, trans. by Christiansen, pp. 25–26. The latter adduces several textual and political arguments for placing the composition between 1185 and 1189. But, as he admits, they all are circumstantial, and there is no hard evidence against a date into the 1190s. I agree that the tone of the last remark in the chronicle, 'We rowed home with immense jubilation. May the Ruler of all things order this conclusion in His peace', is a good pointer to a date shortly after the events of 1185 (*Works of Sven Aggesen*, trans. by Christiansen, p. 25). I am grateful to Michael Gelting for having raised the issue of dating.

and blind king Vermund, who is under pressure from an imperial army and is challenged to put up his best man for a duel. His own son, Uffe, has always been mute and equally useless in war. Through an unexpected turn of events, the son suddenly speaks, picks up his father's favourite sword, and slays a German warrior. The other episode vents the same anti-German and anti-imperial morale.⁸ The German emperor, Otto, asks for the hand of the energetic and attractive Danish queen, Thyra. She pretends to agree, but buys time and receives money from the Emperor, using various excuses. She uses the means to build Danevirke, the defensive line that separates Jutland from the Empire. When Otto finally comes to claim his wife-to-be, he is ridiculed at Danevirke in Thyra's speech and is not allowed to enter through the gates — which have just been built at his own expense. This was the ultimate putdown of the great Emperor by the Queen of a small neighbouring country!

In the Christian part of the story, Sven emphasizes the importance and sanctity of the two Canutes, St Canute the King (d. 1086) and St Canute Lavard the Duke (d. 1131), the father of Valdemar the Great. Unlike the author of the *Historia Norwegie* and Saxo, Sven did not provide a geographical introduction to his work; it would have probably been too pompous an introduction for such a short work. But his powerful summary of Valdemar the Great's achievements corresponds to the missionary and territorial aspects present in the *Historia Norwegie*: Valdemar subdued and Christianized the Vends at Rügen; he provided for a permanent watch-post at the island of Sprogø, thus making the Great Belt secure against pirates; and he fortified Danevirke (the border fortification thus gets thematized in Sven's work by pointing out its long-lasting importance for pagan as well as contemporary Christian Danish identity).

Pagan Past in Christian History

The *Historia Norwegie* and Sven's brief history are certainly the first texts in each country in which an account of the pagan past is integrated with a national narrative. In both texts, one can discern a rhetorical register different from the later narrative. In the *Historia Norwegie*, the author seems to have been restricted by a list-like genealogy (perhaps transmitted orally in a metrical form), but he does achieve a comparatively smooth transition from this material into a broader

⁸ For a recent contextualized assessment of Saxo's and Sven's 'anti-German' attitudes, see Thomas Foerster, *Vergleich und Identität: Selbst- und Fremddeutung im Norden des hochmittelalterlichen Europa*, Europa im Mittelalter, 14 (Berlin: Akademie, 2009), on Sven pp. 128–30.

narrative. Sven Aggesen seems to have had a freer hand in developing the anecdotes of Vermund and Uffe and of Thyra and the Emperor than he did in the parts of the work we term historical. But neither the anonymous author of the *Historia Norwegie* nor Sven hints in any way that we are dealing with mythical or otherwise uncertain or fictional stories. What they report about pagan times should be taken by the reader as history in the same way as the later narrative is. In that sense, the pagan past is completely integrated into both narratives.⁹

This feature was an important historiographical development in itself, and symptomatic as a secondary phase after the primary Christian pedigree of the country had been well established, mainly in the form of the saintly figures of the two Olavs (in Norway) and the two Canutes (in Denmark).¹⁰ Again, our authors are the first to stress in unequivocal terms that their martyrdoms are the crucial historical facts in local Christian history. Constructing the past around these *martyria* became the dominating model in thirteenth-century vernacular history writing, as witnessed by *Heimskringla* for Norway and *Knýtlinga saga* for Denmark. The honour for this development should definitely not go to our two present authors — rather, they gave voice to a cultural memory that had been firmly accepted by the elite during the twelfth century (and for the Olavs, probably already in the eleventh century).

To exemplify the flavour and agenda of both texts, let us look at a couple of passages from them. A defining moment in twelfth-century Danish dynastic history was the slaying in 1131 of Knud/Canute Lavard, the father of Valdemar the Great (1157–82), by his cousin Magnus, a son of King Niels (1104–34). This story constitutes the central passage of Sven's narrative:

Tempore illo prefatus Canutus Ringstadiensis, uir prudens, discretus, facetus, strenuus omnique uirtutis probitate pollens, dux factus Slesuicensis claruit. Nam et mire strenuitatis preualentia Slauorum efferam rabiem compescuit mirificaque uirtute sue iurisdictioni subiugauit. Cuius uirtutibus M. eclipsatus languescere cepit inuidia, que caput assolet in prosperis alterius rebus dimittere; [Gertz has conjectured several words here, for instance the name of *M(agnus)*, not accepted by Christiansen in whose translation a lacuna is indicated instead] letum cepit timida ei machinari ambitione, ne regno ipse priuaretur momentaneo,

⁹ Analysed in Lars Boje Mortensen, 'The Status of the "Mythical" Past in Nordic Latin Historiography (c. 1170–1220)', in *Medieval Narratives between History and Fiction: From the Centre to the Periphery of Europe, c. 1100–1400*, ed. by Panagiotis Agapitos and Lars Boje Mortensen (forthcoming).

¹⁰ Lars Boje Mortensen, 'Sanctified Beginnings and Mythopoeitic Moments: The First Wave of Writing on the Past in Norway, Denmark, and Hungary, c. 1000–1230', in *Making of Christian Myths*, pp. 247–73.

corona si ille non ditaretur eterna. Semper enim regibus suspecta est probitas, 'omnisque potestas / impatiens consortis erit'. Ita 'perit fas iusque bonumque / uite mortisque pudor'. Spreto namque consanguinitatis uinculo, adhibitis secum eiusdem Canuti ducis consanguineo, Henrico uidelicet Skatelar, aliisque, de cede Canuti clandestina uelut super arduo regni negotio in conclau captabant consilia. Nam in silua penes Haraldstathæ locum illi determinabant colloqui. Quibus solius fidelitatis sibi conscius Christi athleta occurrere non detrectauit intrepidus: unius sancte crucis insignitus uexillo, non clipeo protectus aut galea, duobus tantum comitatus satellitibus, ibi luporum rabiem agnus prestolabatur. Sceleris post modicum succedere autores, lupi ouinis induti exuuiis, loricas et galeas caputis contegentes et cappis. Nec mora, uerum Israëlitam suumque consobrinum trucidare pacis emuli festinant, et animam celo satagunt transmittere, que carnis prius ergastulo extitit inclusa. Cuius corpus postmodum exanime Christi deferunt fideles humandum Rinstadium, ubi multis cernentibus a christo domini diuina potentia multa patrata sunt miracula.¹¹

[During the time of that same king [Niels], Knut of Ringsted [Canute Lavard], a man who was wise, discriminating, courteous, energetic and strong in the virtue of honesty, became famous as the duke of Schleswig. He cowed the wild fury of the Slavs by his wonderful vigour and prudence and brought them under his jurisdiction by his extraordinary virtue. Envy meditated on his virtues [...] and began to grow sick, for her head is apt to hang low at the prosperity of others. With timorous ambition, Magnus began to plot his death, so that he would not be deprived of the transient kingdom even if he failed to win the everlasting crown. For goodness is always suspect to kings: '[...] all power will be / impatient of a consort [...]' and thus: 'Right, law and goodness perish, / and all respect for life and death.' For they put aside the ties of kinship and joined together with the same Duke Knut's kinsman — that is, with Henrik the Lamé — and took counsel for the killing of Knut in covert conclave, as if it were a high matter of state. So they appointed a place in the wood at Haraldsted to confer with him. And the fearless champion of Christ, conscious of his own good faith alone, did not hesitate to meet them. Marked out only by the banner of the Holy Cross, protected neither by shield nor by helmet and escorted by no more than two guards, the lamb stood there ready for the furious wolves. The criminals arrive later, wolves in sheep's clothing, with hoods and cloaks concealing coats of mail and helmets. Without delay the enemies of peace make haste to slaughter the 'Israelite indeed', their own cousin, and occupy themselves in sending to Heaven the soul that had previously been held captive within the prison of the flesh. Followers of Christ afterwards bear his lifeless body to Ringsted for burial, where by the divine power of the Lord many miracles were worked by Christ before numerous witnesses.]¹²

Three features of this passage deserve to be noted. First, it is clear that Sven plays out the narrative against a complex textual backdrop of quotations and

¹¹ The Latin text I quote is from Gertz's somewhat reconstructed X-text (Aggesen, *Brevis historia*, pp. 130–32); except for one case I have glossed over Gertz's conjectures in this passage (conjectures which, in fact, have some manuscript authority).

¹² *Works of Sven Aggesen*, Chapter 13, trans. by Christiansen, pp. 68–69.

allusions to biblical, classical, and recent liturgical writing.¹³ The first hagiographic and liturgical writing on St Canute the Duke has only been preserved in a very fragmentary state, but there is hardly any doubt that Sven borrows and develops motifs from that literature. The quotations from classical literature (one from Lucan's epic poem *Civil War*) add another dimension — we are dealing both with events which are inscribed into sacred history as well as with a conflict on the magnitude of that of Caesar and Pompey.

As a second feature in this careful composition, we may note a hagiographic motif that achieves a certain ambiguity when placed in a continuous historical narrative. St Canute is the poor and innocent victim of a family feud, and he gives away his life due to an unfortunate and good-hearted lack of protection — a tragic historical accident with wide-ranging effects for the future of Denmark. There is thus a clear moral condemnation of Magnus's behaviour — that the world would have been a better place without this event. But the condemnation balances against the divine necessity of Canute's martyrdom. His peaceful arrival to the meeting was already part of the divine plan to make him a martyr (and eventually the forefather of the Valdemarian dynasty ruling when Sven was writing). This tension between morality and necessity is not resolved in the text, and it becomes more acute with the mixture of liturgical and historical aspects.

Related to this is a final trait that should be highlighted. Sven manages to balance the complex intertextuality and the ambiguous status of Canute's martyrdom in a way that brings to the reader a sense of drama and passion, even if this is only a small vignette compared to the liturgical literature. It was obviously important to Sven (as well as to Saxo and other contemporaries) to consolidate and effectively repeat what was such an important part of the ruling elite's cultural memory: that Duke Canute Lavard, the father of Valdemar the Great, had died a martyr's death. Sven could take for granted that people knew the outline of the story, but his task as a narrator was to create or rekindle emotions in the audience. The murder of Canute had taken place half a century earlier, and thus an emotional recreation of the scene could be necessary to enforce dynastic and national memories.

Like the two Canutes in Denmark, the two Olavs became an undisputed part of the Norwegian narrative concerning the presence of Christian sanctity in national history. The Norwegian kings preceded the Canutes by approximately a century, and it is almost impossible to catch glimpses of the early (eleventh-

¹³ For references to all the allusions and notes on textual difficulties in this passage, see the critical apparatus in Gertz's edition in *SMHD*, I, 130–32 and the notes by Christiansen in *Works of Sven Aggesen*, pp. 130–32.

century) phase of the formation of the related cultural memory. What we can see is that the later twelfth century was, apparently, the period in which the crucial parts of the larger historical narrative were consolidated and elaborated to a great degree. A small passage from the *Historia Norwegie* shows how this textual 'canonization' could be done. This is a peculiar summary of Olav Tryggvason's missionary successes placed in the text just before the narrative of his mysterious death at the battle of Svolder (1000):

Interim Olauus Regi regum reconsilians omnes compatriotos suos in maritimis, et si quos ipse episcopus spirituali gladio nequiuuit, rex adhibito materiali nobilem cum ignobili, lactentem cum homine sene Christi subiugauit imperio. Sicque factum est ut infra quinquennium omnes tributarios, id est Hatlendenses, Orchardenses, Fereyngenses ac Tilenses, fide preclaros, spe gaudentes, caritate feruentes redderet Christo. Vnde currus Dei decem milibus multiplicatus ac quadriga Christi gratuita eiusdem saluacione referta per hunc mirificum regem ueluti ualidissimo equo usque in fines orbis terre circumducti retrogrado cursu ad patriam Paradisum reuehuntur.

[In the meantime Olav brought all those of his compatriots who lived along the seaboard into union with the King of Kings, and if the bishop was unable to achieve this with his spiritual sword, the king, applying his earthly weapon, led captive into Christ's empire the noble and ignoble, the babe at the breast and the greybeard. This was effected in such a way that within five years he made all the tributary territories, that is, Shetland, the Orkneys, the Faroes and Iceland, remarkable in their devotion, joyous in their expectations and glowing in their affection for Christ. Hence God's triumphal car, increased by ten thousand souls, and Christ's chariot, filled with His freely-granted deliverance, were drawn by this wonder-working monarch as if by a powerful steed right to the ends of the earth till they turned around in their course and drove back to our homeland, which is Paradise.]¹⁴

As in Sven's description of St Canute the Duke, this is clearly no small matter. On the individual, local, and universal scale, Olav Tryggvason makes an enormous difference. The intertwining of physical and spiritual geography is striking, and the whole passage presents a poetic highpoint of the *Historia Norwegie* (that is, of its surviving small part). Four biblical passages are woven in to frame Olav's historical and spiritual impact, one of which is well known in missionary discourse, 'to the ends of the earth' (*in fines orbis terre*), taken from Psalm 18.¹⁵ Peter Fisher's translation brings forth some of the elaborate nature of the passage, as well as the author's highly alliterative style ('the babe at the breast and the greybeard').

The poetics and the biblical allusions elevate the text almost out of concrete history, but only almost. One could say that a tension similar to the one in Sven's

¹⁴ *Historia Norwegie*, c. 17, pp. 30–32.

¹⁵ For precise references, see the commentary in *Historia Norwegie*, pp. 147–48.

text between concrete condemnation and divine necessity is found here. In a way, this is a creative contradiction throughout all of Christian history: the specifics of history do matter, but they are constantly in danger of dissolving in the face of salvation and eternity.

The Authors and their Institutional Contexts

Another area where our two texts lend themselves to comparison is the social and institutional positions of their authors. How close were they to royal, archiepiscopal, or episcopal power, and what does that imply for our understanding of their versions of the national past? How representative were they? Here is an opportunity to quickly review two sets of scholarly problems in which, incidentally, one can observe two extremes of research strategy: in the case of the *Historia Norwegie*, the authorial context of which is so little known, it has been very tempting to suggest links to well-known persons and learned environments. In the case of Sven, of whom we know so much, attempts to dissociate him from the well-known environment that he himself mentions have for some reason prevailed.

During the late nineteenth and most of the twentieth century, a series of fanciful ideas were launched to identify the dedicatee of the *Historia Norwegie*, Agnellus, and suggestions were put forward for locating the text in all sorts of places from Orkney to Lund in Denmark. In her studies from the late 1990s, Inger Ekrem took a different approach: she coupled the *Historia Norwegie* to the best-known learned environment in twelfth-century Norway, namely the emergent archiepiscopal see in Trondheim.¹⁶ Her ideas were that the work's contents could convince the papacy that Norway was ready for a church province of its own and that, perhaps, the author was none other than the second archbishop Eystein Erlendsson. While she was right that the *Historia Norwegie* certainly extols Norway and the two Olavs in a way that tallies very well with the establishment of the new province in 1152/53, her date, place, and *causa scribendi* fail to convince me, precisely because we know the official Trondheim ideology as set out in a number of other works, not least the *Passio Olavi* and Theodoricus's history dedicated to

¹⁶ Inger Ekrem, *Nytt lys over Historia Norwegie: Mot en løsning i debatten om dens alder?* (Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen, IKRR, Seksjon for gresk, latin og egyptologi, 1998); Inger Ekrem, 'Historia Norwegie og erkebispesetet i Nidaros', *Collegium Medievale*, 11 (1998, publ. 1999), 49–67; and Inger Ekrem, 'Om Passio Olavis tilblivelse og eventuelle forbindelse med Historia Norwegie', in *Olavslegenden og den latinske historieskrivning i 1100-tallets Norge*, ed. by Inger Ekrem and others (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2000), pp. 108–56.

Eystein himself. If these writings and the *Historia Norwegie* were indeed written within such a restricted circle, then the lack of direct textual references between them is very odd — regardless of whether we date the *Historia Norwegie* before or after Theodoricus's work.

Admittedly, we cannot link the *Historia Norwegie* directly to a particular bishop or king. But this lack of precision should not lead to complete agnosticism. We have learned from more recent scholarship in European historical literature and book culture that in the twelfth century an ambitious learned work like this must have been associated with the elite.¹⁷ There is no chance that a chronicle of this sort is an inept school exercise, as was suggested by some twentieth-century scholars.¹⁸ There are good indicators pointing towards eastern Norway, possibly the bishoprics of Oslo or Hamar. This suggestion would also explain the lack of connections to the contemporary Trondheim textual landscape — even if the overall national frame is very similar. So my conclusion is that the author was close to episcopal and princely power, but was not coordinated with Eystein in Trondheim and his contemporary efforts to formulate a national memory and identity.

For the Danish history of Sven Aggesen, we find ourselves, paradoxically, in the opposite situation. To my mind, everything points to the coordination with a national project centred around Lund, Archbishop Absalon, and King Valdemar, as well as with the subsequent grand history of Saxo Grammaticus. Yet the crucial passage (in this regard) in Sven's narrative has been interpreted differently:

Quorum gesta plenarie superfluum duxi recolere, ne crebrius idem repetitum fastidium pariat audientibus, cum, illustri archipresule Absalone referente, contubernalis meus Saxo elegantiori stilo omnium gesta executurus prolixius insudabat.¹⁹

[I have deemed it superfluous to recount their deeds in full, lest they should be repeated too often and weary my readers, for the noble Archbishop Absalon informed me that my

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. Karl Ferdinand Werner, 'Gott, Herscher und Historiograph: Der Geschichtsschreiber als Interpret des Wirken Gottes in der Welt und Ratgeber der Könige (4.–12. Jahrhundert)', in *Deus qui mutat tempora: Menschen und Institutionen im Wandel des Mittelalters: Festschrift für Alfons Becker zu seinem fünfundsiebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. by Ernst-Dieter Hehl and others (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1987), pp. 1–31; Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der 'nationes': Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter*, Münstersche Historische Forschung, 8 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995); and Hans-Werner Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewusstsein in hohen Mittelalter* (Berlin: Akademie, 1999), esp. chap. 4, pp. 243–409.

¹⁸ Anne Holtsmark, 'Om de norske kongers sagaer', *Edda*, 38 (1938), 145–64 (p. 162).

¹⁹ Aggesen, *Brevis historia*, c. 10, p. 124.

colleague Saxo was working to describe at greater length the deeds of them all in a more elegant style.]²⁰

All scholars who have discussed this passage acknowledge that *Absalone referente* can be understood either as ‘Saxo writes, as Absalon informed me’ or as ‘Saxo writes his history based on Absalon’s account’. The eminent Danish philologist from the beginning of the twentieth century, Martin Clarentius Gertz, who produced a groundbreaking edition and translation of *Sven*, was convinced that *contubernalis* must refer to a lay status as a fellow retainer (a member of the royal bodyguards), and he used the passage to show that *Sven* would not have known of Saxo’s work unless Absalon had told him.²¹ In an important article in 1989, Karsten Friis-Jensen showed that *contubernalis* within the ecclesiastical hierarchy could also mean ‘fellow canon’ or something similar.²² But he still follows Gertz — like the English translator of *Sven*’s narrative, Eric Christiansen — in creating distance between *Sven* and Saxo: Absalon had to inform *Sven* that there was actually somebody else working on a national history. I find myself in uncomfortable disagreement with three of the finest specialists of Danish medieval Latin, but problems with their interpretation are too serious to simply be discarded. Firstly, to whom does *Sven* address this strange passage? Is it to someone who knows Absalon, or to someone who knows Saxo? Secondly, an alternative interpretation would make better sense: Absalon was indeed the main source for Saxo’s account in his later books. That is a true and relevant statement to make for any reader interested in Danish history. Finally, it seems wholly improbable that two canons at Lund (if we accept Friis-Jensen’s reading of the evidence), the older *Sven* and the younger Saxo, had not coordinated their efforts under the aegis of Absalon. So it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that discussions about Danish history took place at the see of Lund around 1180, with *Sven* setting out to write a brief account within a short time span and Saxo embarking on a more ambitious project, which resulted in at least three decades of painstaking work.

²⁰ *Works of Sven Aggesen*, trans. by Christiansen, p. 65.

²¹ Gertz’s own translation of the passage to Danish, *Sven Aggesøns historiske Skrifter*, 66–67: ‘Disse Bedrifter har jeg imidlertid anset det for overflødigt at genkalde udførligt i Erindringen, for at ikke en for hyppig Gentagelse af et og det samme skal vække lede hos Tilhørerne; thi efter hvad den berømmelige Ærkebiskop Absolon meddelte mig, anstrengte min Hirdfælle Saxo sig just da ivrigt med at ville skildre alle disse Bedrifter vidtløftigere i en finere Stil.’

²² Karsten Friis-Jensen, ‘Was Saxo a Canon of Lund?’, *Cahiers de l’Institut du moyen-âge grec et latin*, 59 (1989), 331–57.

It would seem then that we are dealing in both cases with a very restricted elite who would be the primary audience for these historical works, and that the Danish authors were very close to both lay and ecclesiastical authorities. However, the uncertain position of the *Historia Norwegie* and the somewhat surprisingly superfluous character of Sven's work — taken together with a very thin textual transmission in both cases — should remind us that more works of this kind have been lost. No one had guessed at the existence of something like the *Historia Norwegie* when it sensationally surfaced in a Scottish library around 1850, and because of Saxo's magisterial account no one would have missed Sven's history had it not survived.

We would do well both by placing historiographical efforts like these very close to the highest authorities and by admitting that at least a few more similar works must have been produced by and for the Norwegian and Danish elites in this period. In other words, the learned historical discourse in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century was richer than we can see.

One way to approach the contemporary significance of the *Historia Norwegie* and Sven's *Short History of the Kings of Denmark* is, of course, to look at traces of their use in the late twelfth and the thirteenth centuries. As already noted, their transmission is equally thin: no medieval copy of either text exists, and we cannot deduce from later copies the existence of more than two or three medieval codices in each case. Sven's history was no doubt used by Saxo — even though he states in his preface that his own work is the first of its kind — and there is some evidence that points to Saxo's knowledge of the *Historia Norwegie* as well. Speculations about the possible impact of the lost books of the *Historia Norwegie* on the kings' sagas were also made in the good old days of *Quellenforschung*, but these suggestions seem not to have attracted any interest recently.²³ Thus we are easily led to an assumption that the two works were both failures: their message does not seem to have spread outside narrow ecclesiastical circles and they were rather quickly forgotten.

Yet it is somewhat anachronistic to pronounce them as failures due to an apparently restricted readership. Perhaps they actually did the job they were supposed

²³ *Monumenta historica Norvegiae: Latinske kildeskrifter til Norges historie i middelalderen*, ed. by Gustav Storm (Kristiania: Brøgger, 1880; repr. Oslo: Aas & Wahl, 1973), pp. xxix–xxx. See, however, Karsten Friis-Jensen 'Olav den Hellige hos Saxo', in *Olavslegenden og den latinske historieskrivning i 1100-tallets Norge*, ed. by Ekrem and others, pp. 250–62 (p. 260), and Mortensen in the introduction to *Historia Norwegie*, p. 33, both pointing to Saxo as a possible user of the text.

to do; namely, to represent in book form the ideological and intellectual work done by parts of the Danish and Norwegian elites during the twelfth century in order to define their own chronological, geographical, and sacred position in the world. They are symptomatic of a discourse which had to relate local history to universal history, and in so doing they both integrated the pre-Christian past in a plausible manner and codified the very special status of the two Olavs and the two Canutes, respectively. The elites already subscribed to their unassailable sanctity; this was the backbone of their cultural memory. The basics of this discourse were shared by literate and non-literate members of the elite. The specifics had to be worked out by highly learned men, and even if the texts in question were not copied widely, the contents must have been discussed and retold both before and after the process of written composition. Our two pioneering works were mainly institutional products concerned with forging national identities through serious ideological and intellectual work. They were not written in order to convince outsiders of the legitimacy of the present status of the two kingdoms (of Norway and Denmark) and their ecclesiastical institutions. They were written to convince the insiders that the specifics of the local past could actually be codified in a narrative mode — in the same way as other Christian ‘nations’ had already done — and to assure them that such literary codifications were to be found on the shelves of relevant episcopal libraries. *Historia Norwegie* and Sven Aggesen’s *Short History of the Kings of Denmark* thus inscribed the national narrative into the greater and eternal book of universal Christian history.

THEODORICUS MONACHUS: THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY AND THE HISTORY OF SALVATION

Sverre Bagge

Historical writing in Norway began in the late twelfth century, clearly as the result of European influence, first through the conversion to Christianity (in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries) and then as the result of the introduction of European learning, particularly from the mid-twelfth century in connection with the foundation of the Norwegian church province in 1152/53. There is thus nothing to suggest that any such works or any longer texts were composed in the pre-Christian period, despite the existence of the runic alphabet. However, an oral tradition existed, partly in the form of skaldic poetry praising kings and princes and partly in the form of storytelling, both of which influenced later historical texts.

Theodoricus Monachus's history of the Norwegian kings is one of the first extant works on the history of the country,¹ possibly even *the* first, and as such provides important evidence both for the actual history of Norway and for the development of historical narrative and literature in general. Theodoricus's work must have been written between 1177 and 1188 — the year of the death of the pretender Eystein Meyla, which is mentioned in the work, and that of Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson, to whom it is dedicated. The name Theodoricus is probably a Latinization of the Old Norse Þórir (Tore in modern Norwegian). Two contemporary bishops had this name: the Bishop of Hamar (1189/90–96) and the Archbishop of Nidaros (1205–14). Both had connections with the monastery of St Victor in Paris, from which the author is likely to have derived much of his learning.² Of

¹ Theodoricus, *Historia*, pp. 1–68. A new edition is now being prepared by Egil Kraggerud.

² The two are mentioned respectively as *frater noster* and *canonicus noster* in the obituary of the Augustinian house of St Victor in Paris.

these two, the later archbishop is the more likely candidate. The dedicatee, Archbishop Eystein, a central figure in the cultural as well as the political life of the country, probably also had such a connection.³

Thus, Theodoricus belonged to the Norwegian clerical elite as an Augustinian canon at the time of writing and later as a bishop or archbishop. Admittedly, 'Monachus' in the incipit is not the normal term for an Augustinian, but as the work is only preserved in some transcripts from the seventeenth century,⁴ the title may well be a later addition. The Augustinian link is also evident from the work itself. Already in the prologue, Theodoricus quotes Hugh of St Victor (d. 1141), one of the greatest intellectuals of the order. His work also contains other quotations from Hugh and other Victorines and shows evidence that Theodoricus used the library of St Victor for many of the texts he quotes or paraphrases.⁵

In his prologue Theodoricus, like many of his contemporaries, pays considerable attention to the question of sources. He has composed his work in accordance with what he has been able to find out 'by carefully seeking information from those among whom the memory of these matters is believed to have been particularly strong, whom we call Icelanders, who commemorate these famous deeds in their ancient songs'.⁶ He has thus used skaldic poetry, of which there is actually evidence in his work. Most scholars have also concluded from this and other statements that he only had oral information, which would then mean information from Icelandic storytellers, possibly the same as the skalds. However, it seems strange for Theodoricus to refer only to Icelandic oral evidence; there must have been plenty of oral storytelling in Norway as well. As a matter of fact, Theodoricus never states unequivocally that he only had oral sources. His statement that he will start his work with Harald Fairhair because he had no written

³ Erik Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein: Statsmann og kirkebygger* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996), pp. 31–40.

⁴ *Monumenta historica Norvegiae: Latinske kildeskrifter til Norges historie i middelalderen*, ed. by Gustav Storm (Kristiania: Brøgger, 1880; repr. Oslo: Aas & Wahl, 1973), pp. iii–v.

⁵ Arne Odd Johnsen, *Om Theodoricus og hans Historia de antiquitate regum norwagiensium* (Oslo: J. Dybwad, 1939), pp. 56–60; Sverre Bagge, 'Theodoricus Monachus: Clerical Historiography in Twelfth-Century Norway', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 14 (1989), 113–33 (pp. 114–15); Lars Boje Mortensen, 'Det 12. århundredes renæssanse i Norge: Teoderik Munk og Romerriget', *Antikken i norsk litteratur*, ed. by Øyvind Andersen and Asbjørn Aarseth (Bergen: University of Bergen, 1993), pp. 17–35 (pp. 24–29).

⁶ Theodoricus, *Historia*, Prologus, p. 3: 'prout sagaciter perquirere potuimus ab eis, penes quos horum memoria præcipue vigere creditur, quos nos Islendinga vocamus, qui hæc in suis antiquis carminibus percelebrata recolunt'.

evidence of the previous period suggests the opposite, and some other passages point in the same direction.⁷ Theodoricus may thus have known the earliest histories of Norway by the Icelanders Sæmundr (d. 1133) or Ari (1068–1148) or both of them, but as these works are lost we cannot know this for sure, nor can we know how much he derived from them if he knew them. The only written source to which he directly refers is an otherwise unknown *Catalogus regum*, apparently a kind of genealogy or brief account of the reigns of the kings.

Concerning the reason for composing his work, Theodoricus points to the importance for a country of having its history written down: ‘And because almost no people is so rude and uncivilized that it has not passed on some monuments of its predecessors to later generations, I have thought it proper to record for posterity these relics of our forefathers, few though they are’.⁸ Like Saxo a little later, he does not disguise his patriotic sentiments, quoting Hugh of St Victor as well as Siegebert of Gembloux on the Normans’ terrible devastation in France. Thus, an important motive for Theodoricus is patriotic pride, which even extends to his ancestors’ barbarous behaviour in Christian countries. Patriotism is no unusual motive for writing history in the twelfth century or even earlier; most ‘new’ peoples had their history written some time after the introduction of Christianity and literacy.⁹ However, Theodoricus does not really exploit the possibility of elaborating on his ancestors’ great deeds in his actual narrative, which is mostly terse and dry, almost annalistic. Anyone familiar with the Icelandic kings’ sagas will have the feeling of entering a completely different world when opening the pages of Theodoricus’s

⁷ Theodoricus, *Historia*, Prologus, p. 3: ‘non quia dubitaverim etiam ante ejus ætatem fuisse in hac terra viros [...] conspicuos, quos [...] scriptorum inops delevit opinio’; cf. *ibid.*, p. 4. See also Theodore M. Andersson, ‘Kings’ Sagas (*Konungasögur*)’, in *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Carol J. Clover and John Lindow (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 197–238 (pp. 210–11); and Sverre Bagge, ‘The Making of a Missionary King: The Medieval Accounts of Olav Trygvason and the Conversion of Norway’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 105 (2006), 473–513 (pp. 485–90 with references). Theodoricus’s commonplace assertion that he has written what he has heard, not seen (*‘non visa sed audita’*), which has often been understood as a denial of having used written sources, clearly refers to the distinction between being an eyewitness or relying on information from others; see Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l’occident médiéval* (Paris: Aubier, 1980), pp. 77–78.

⁸ Theodoricus, *Historia*, Prologus, p. 3: ‘Et quia paene nulla natio est tam rudis et inculta, quæ non aliqua monumenta suorum antecessorum ad posteros transmiserit, dignum putavi hæc, pauca licet, majorum nostrorum memoriæ posteritatis tradere.’

⁹ Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung in Europa der ‘nationes’: Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter*, Münstersche historische Forschungen, 8 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995).

work, and most modern scholars have also regarded him as inferior to Snorri and other saga authors as a writer. He also differs from the other contemporary Latin chronicle, *Historia Norwegie*,¹⁰ which is written in a highly rhetorical style aiming at dramatic effect, thus resembling the slightly later *Gesta Danorum* by the Dane Saxo Grammaticus, one of the masterpieces of medieval Latin historiography.

Although Theodoricus does not lack patriotism, this is not his main reason for writing — at least it is not patriotism in the same sense as the one we find in the vernacular saga literature. Theodoricus is above all concerned with the relationship between the history of his country and universal history. Most of the new kingdoms that came into being as the result of the expansion of Western Christendom in the tenth and eleventh centuries developed their own national historiography, in which the origin of the people or the dynasty was a crucial issue. This seems natural enough against the background of the radical changes that took place through the conversion to Christianity, the formation of a larger kingdom or principality, and the introduction of literacy, the Latin language, and a learned culture with a long tradition. Joining the Christian commonwealth and adapting to its culture might be interpreted as a change from darkness to light, but the shift would also imply that the new peoples were barbarians who had to accept the higher culture of the old Christian kingdoms. The national histories produced in the 'new' countries may therefore be regarded as answers to this problem. How should the converted peoples adapt to the new situation and grasp the opportunities presented by the common Christian culture without regarding themselves as inferior? How should they relate to their own past and how should this past be related to the common Christian history of salvation from the New Testament, via the conversion of the Roman Empire to the formation of the contemporary Christian commonwealth?

A usual way of solving these problems was to trace one's own people back to some mythical past, either in order to show its origin in some famous people — like the Trojans or the Romans — or to point to a parallel history to that of the Romans or of contemporary Christian nations. Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, dealing with skaldic poetry and ancient myths, traces the Norwegians and their kings back to the Trojans,¹¹ but otherwise the alternative strategy seems more prominent in Scandinavian historiography. Thus, Saxo Grammaticus traces the origins of Denmark at

¹⁰ *Historia Norwegie*.

¹¹ Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, I: *Prologue and Gylfaginning*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society, 1988), pp. 4–6.

least as far back as that of Rome and points to numerous parallels between Danish and Roman history, though without even mentioning the Romans: the Danes have always been independent, never submitting to the Roman Empire.¹² In a similar way, the anonymous author of the *Historia Norwegie* finds the origin of the dynasty in the pagan gods, whom he regards as kings who were worshipped as gods by later generations.¹³ The source for this genealogy is an extant poem, *Ynglingatal*, probably composed in the Viking Age. The entire prehistoric genealogy comprises twenty-eight generations. According to the normal rule of one generation per thirty years this means 840 years, which brings the origin of the dynasty back to the time of the birth of Christ, although this is not stated explicitly. The genealogy is continued until Harald Fairhair, the first ruler of the whole of Norway. Later, Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) in his *Heimskringla* (c. 1230) gives a more detailed but largely similar account of the early history of the dynasty, with extensive quotations from *Ynglingatal*. Snorri depicts the god Odin as the founder of the dynasty: Odin was actually a king who after his death was regarded as a god by his people. He lived at a time when the Romans were conquering the Mediterranean and understood that he had to establish his own kingdom in the north.¹⁴ Thus, Snorri, like Saxo, succeeds in creating a parallel history to that of the Romans while securing his dynasty's independence from them.

In rejecting the evidence for Norwegian history before the reign of Harald Fairhair, Theodoricus has to refrain from this way of integrating the history of Norway into universal history and must find another one. He states in the prologue that, according to ancient models, he has inserted digressions into his work, which in his opinion 'are not without value in serving to delight the mind of the reader'.¹⁵ Together with some other passages in the text, these digressions show a quite impressive knowledge of classical and medieval Christian literature. There are quotations and allusions to Plato, Chrysippus, Pliny, Sallust, Lucan, Horace, Vergil, Ovid, Jerome, Eusebius, Augustine, Boethius, Isidore, Bede, Remigius, Paul the Deacon, Siegebert of Gembloux, and Hugh of St Victor, most of whom

¹² Karsten Friis-Jensen, 'Saxo Grammaticus's Study of the Roman Historiographers and his Vision of History', in *Saxo Grammaticus: tra storiografia e letteratura: Bevagna, 27–29 settembre 1990*, ed. by Carlo Santini (Rome: Calamo, 1992), pp. 61–81.

¹³ *Historia Norwegie*, cc. 9–11, pp. 74–81.

¹⁴ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, 4 vols (Copenhagen: Møller, 1893–1901), I, 10–22.

¹⁵ Theodoricus, *Historia*, Prologus, p. 4: 'non inutiles, ut arbitramur, ad delectandum animum lectoris'.

Theodoricus must have read in the library of St Victor.¹⁶ These texts do not simply serve as a show of learning, but are Theodoricus's main means of linking the history of Norway to the main history of salvation through a series of typological parallels.¹⁷ In this way, Theodoricus's focus is on the religious significance of the events rather than on the events themselves. Moreover, he pays particular attention to the time when these two strands of history — the universal and the national — converged through the conversion to Christianity, which thus becomes a major theme in the work, dealt with in the accounts of the two missionary kings: Olav Tryggvason (995–1000) and above all St Olav Haraldsson (1015–30). Although Theodoricus has little to tell about the ancient history of his people, he is concerned with its relationship to the rest of Christendom. Let us look more closely at Theodoricus's historical narrative by examining his account of this latter king, who was regarded by most authors, including Theodoricus himself, as the most important figure in Norwegian history.

The History of St Olav

St Olav is clearly the central figure in Theodoricus's work. He is the subject of the longest account of any single king, which covers nineteen out of sixty-seven pages in the modern edition and contains a cluster of digressions — four out of twelve. The account of Olav is also placed in the middle of the work, that is, Chapters 15–20 out of thirty-four chapters. The chapter division is most probably original.¹⁸

St Olav is introduced for the first time in connection with his predecessor, who is said to have baptized him. Theodoricus tells that Olav Tryggvason met St Olav — who was then three years old — with his mother,¹⁹ and according to some ('secundum quosdam') baptized both of them, whereas others maintain that St Olav was baptized in England. Theodoricus then states that he has read in the

¹⁶ See the list of correspondences in Johnsen, *Om Theodoricus*, pp. 56–57, and his discussion of the whole series of allusions and quotations (pp. 29–60). Johnsen shows convincingly that Theodoricus in many cases must have known these authors quite well, but does not discuss the extent of their influence on his historical thought.

¹⁷ Bagge, 'Theodoricus', pp. 117–23.

¹⁸ Bagge, 'Theodoricus', pp. 122–23.

¹⁹ Theodoricus, *Historia*, 13, p. 21: 'ibique tunc puerulum Olavum trium annorum [...] invenit cum matre Asta'; cf. Matthew 2. 11, 'et intrantes domum invenerunt puerum cum Maria matre eius', on the magi finding the newborn Christ.

Historia Normannorum (by William of Jumièges) that Olav was baptized in Rouen. Indicating his preference for one of the two latter opinions, namely that Olav was baptized as an adult and not as a child, he concludes that the question remains open, pointing to the discussion about Constantine's baptism as a parallel. Theodoricus here refers to earlier accounts of St Olav's baptism, which are later to be found in the so-called *Legendary Saga* and Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*.²⁰ Although Theodoricus does not draw any firm conclusion, he seems to side with those who believed that Olav was baptized as an adult and most probably with William of Jumièges. Moreover, he uses this discussion to make another important point, that there is similar doubt regarding Emperor Constantine's baptism. Thus, it is no wonder that there is uncertainty about Olav's baptism in a country without ancient sources, when even Jerome, who lived not long after Constantine, had no certain information concerning his baptism.²¹ Theodoricus here, as in some other places, emerges as the critical historian who knows the uncertainty of ancient traditions and is reluctant to make a definite conclusion when the sources are divergent and unreliable. However, the reference to Constantine serves another purpose as well. Constantine converted the Roman Empire to Christianity and is therefore the parallel in universal history to Olav in Norwegian history. This discussion, therefore, also has a similar typological importance as the digressions.

An awkward problem for Theodoricus is his reference to Olav Tryggvason meeting Olav on his journey to convert Oppland. If the traditional information about Olav's baptism as a child is wrong, it would be difficult to accept this part of Theodoricus's account of Olav Tryggvason's mission. Did Olav Tryggvason not get as far as Olav Haraldsson's home, or did he meet him without baptizing him? The place of this passage in Theodoricus's text also seems awkward. Why did he not include it in the story of Olav? Actually, this arrangement may serve as evidence of Theodoricus's consciousness of writing history rather than biography, arranging his narrative according to the kings' reigns, not their births.²² Placing Olav's

²⁰ *Óláfs saga hins Helga: Die 'Legendarische Saga' über Olav den Heiligen*, ed. and trans. by Anne Heinrichs and others (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1982), c. 8, p. 38; Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, I, 373.

²¹ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 13, p. 23: 'Nec mirum de Olavo hoc contigisse in illa terra, ubi nullus antiquitatum umquam scriptor fuit, cum idem scribat beatus Hieronimus de Constantino magno.'

²² Whereas a clear distinction between history and biography existed in classical Antiquity, the genres tended to merge in the Middle Ages, except in the case of hagiography, by far the most important biographic genre; see J. Gruber and F. Brunhölzl, 'Biographie', in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. II (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 2002), pp. 199–203. In some cases, however,

baptism as an episode in Olav Tryggvason's missionary activity allows Theodoricus to create a continuous story of shifting regimes rather than a series of royal biographies, this in contrast to *Heimskringla* later. Theodoricus has the same arrangement of the early history of Olav Tryggvason. He mentions the persecution of the newborn Olav in connection with Harald Greycloak's reign and then returns to Olav Tryggvason when Earl Hakon tries to entice him from England to Norway.²³

Theodoricus leaves out most of the information on Olav's upbringing and early life. Thus, he once more focuses on history rather than biography. He also leaves out Olav's Viking activities, instead portraying him as the one who reconciled King Ethelred of England with his brothers.²⁴ In contrast to some other versions — and most probably to what actually happened — he also states that Olav fought on the English side against King Cnut of Denmark, not on Cnut's side against the English.²⁵ He probably had ideological reasons for this; he did not want to portray Olav as a Viking. Nor does he repeat the information about Olav's baptism in Rouen, probably because of his adherence to the genre of history. In any case, the account of the young Olav as a peacemaker and defender of the legitimate rulers serves as a good background for his own legitimate claim to Norway. Finally, Theodoricus tells that Olav visited a holy hermit in England who told him about the grace the Lord would grant him and about the death he would suffer. A similar story is usually told about Olav Tryggvason;²⁶ only the *Legendary Saga* has a similar

there seems to have been a distinction between *vita* and *gesta*, as expressed for instance in the difference between Wipo's *Gesta Chuonradi*, devoted to Conrad II's reign, and the anonymous *Vita Heinrici Quarti*, with a stronger focus on Henry as a person; cf. Sverre Bagge, *Kings, Politics and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography c. 950–1150* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 189–90 and 313–27.

²³ Theodoricus, *Historia*, cc. 4 and 7, pp. 9–11 and 13–14. See Bagge, 'The Making', p. 495.

²⁴ His source for this is probably a stanza by Óttarr; see Ove Moberg, *Olav Haraldsson, Knut den store och Sverige: studier i Olav den helliges förhållande till de nordiska grannländerna* (Lund: Gleerup, 1941), pp. 46–49 (p. 61); cf. *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Villadsen og Christensen, 1912–15), A1, 292; and B1, 269, stanza 8.

²⁵ Actually, it seems most likely that Olav fought on Cnut's side, as maintained by Moberg, *Olav Haraldsson*, pp. 25–87, with references to earlier literature; see Sverre Bagge, 'Mellom kilde-kritikk og historisk antropologi: Olav den hellige, aristokratiet og rikssamlingen', *Historisk tidsskrift*, 81 (2002), 173–212 (pp. 179–84). An alternative opinion is in Olav Tveito, 'Olav Haraldssons unge år og relasjonen til engelsk kongemakt: Momenter til *et crux interpretum*', *Collegium Medievale*, 21 (2008), 158–81.

²⁶ This story occurs in *Historia Norwegie* and *Ágrip*, which on several occasions has an alternative version to that of Theodoricus and Oddr (Bagge, 'The Making', pp. 495–503). The

story as Theodoricus's about St Olav, with the addition — as in the stories about Olav Tryggvason — that Olav tried to cheat the hermit by letting one of his men dress like himself, but that the hermit saw through the deceit.²⁷ It is not clear whether Theodoricus omitted this addition or did not know it. An argument in favour of deliberate omission is Theodoricus's focus on history rather than biography and above all on his essential point — Olav's return to Norway in response to God's call.

The background of Olav's conquest of Norway is sketched in the previous chapter of Theodoricus's narrative.²⁸ After Olav's predecessor Olav Tryggvason had been killed in the battle of Svolder in the year 1000, his enemies — the kings of Denmark and Sweden and the Norwegian earl Eirik — had taken control of the country. In practice Eirik and his brother Svein became the rulers, partly on their own behalf and partly on that of the two kings. Shortly before Olav's arrival, Eirik had joined the Danish king Cnut in England and left his young son Hakon in charge of his part of Norway.

The following narrative of Olav's accession to the throne can — in all the sources, including Theodoricus — be divided into three main episodes: (1) Olav capturing the young Earl Hakon jarl in Saudungssund; (2) Olav's visit to his mother and stepfather in Oppland to gain further support; and (3) the battle of Nesjar, where Earl Svein is defeated.

Concerning the first of these episodes, Theodoricus relates that Olav, having arrived in Norway, sailed to a place called Saudungssund (in Sunnfjord in western Norway), where he learned that the young earl was on his way with two ships: one small — called *scuta* in Norwegian — and one larger, which the ancients called *liburna* and which Horace mentions in one of his epodes from which Theodoricus quotes. Olav now devises a ruse, laying his ships on each side of the narrow sound with a rope between them to catch the young Earl's ships unaware and thus to avoid bloodshed. The ruse succeeds; Hakon is captured, gives up his lordship in Norway, and leaves for England.²⁹ Theodoricus's account is also relatively detailed. He relates that both Olav and Hakon had two ships, and even bothers to inform his readers on the size of Hakon's ships, despite the fact this is of no importance for

corresponding story in the two latter is Olav being saved from an ambush by invoking Christ and later seeing a pious abbot on the Scillies.

²⁷ *Óláfs saga hins Helga*, ed. and trans. by Heinrichs and others, chap. 18, p. 64.

²⁸ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 14, pp. 24–25.

²⁹ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 15, pp. 26–27.

his story. His reference to Horace, which is equally irrelevant, is characteristic of his tendency to refer to the classics as often as possible, no doubt with the aim of integrating his history of Norway into the mainstream of universal history. Although his exact account of the ruse is not very detailed, he makes it perfectly clear to the reader how the Earl was captured. The most characteristic feature in Theodoricus, compared to the later sagas, is the lack of drama; there is no attempt to describe what happened when the ships capsized or when the Earl was brought aboard Olav's ship.³⁰ Theodoricus also writes a simple, matter-of-fact Latin without rhetorical embroidery — Saxo would have made much more out of this passage had he included it in his work. More important to Theodoricus than drama and rhetoric is the moral aspect. From Theodoricus's point of view, the episode does not portray the saintly king in a very favourable light: Olav attacks the Earl without any declaration of war or feud and gives him no chance to defend himself. Olav may clearly be accused of unchivalrous behaviour, but Theodoricus has an excuse ready for his hero: he wants to avoid bloodshed.

After this victory, Theodoricus lets Olav spend the winter with his mother and stepfather 'in superiorem provinciam', which probably means the region called Oppland in the vernacular, meaning the inner parts of eastern Norway. The later sagas give a number of details about this visit that Theodoricus may well have known but chose not to include. However, he does hint at Olav's aim, namely to gather men for the decisive battle against his other enemy — Earl Svein — that took place the following spring at Nesjar, along the south-eastern coast, and ended in Olav's victory. The battle is celebrated in a skaldic poem by Sigvatr, the most prominent of Olav's skalds, on which all later narratives seem to be based, including that of Theodoricus.³¹ Theodoricus's description is very brief, mainly stating that Olav was victorious, but it does include the statement that Svein — upon seeing that he was defeated — wanted to die with his men rather than withdraw but was dragged away by his brother-in-law Einar and left for Rus'. This episode is described in greater detail in the later sagas, which also give more information about the fighting. Sigvatr tells that the battle was fought on Palm Sunday, which in the *Legendary Saga* is developed into a story of Olav trying to postpone the battle to avoid fighting on a holiday, but being forced to do so by Svein, who

³⁰ Sverre Bagge, 'Nordic Uniqueness in the Middle Ages? Political and Literary Aspects', *Gripla*, 20 (2009), 49–76 (pp. 57–58).

³¹ *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Jónsson, AI, 228–32; and BI, 217–20; and Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 15, p. 28.

rejected his proposal.³² Such a story would fit in well with Theodoricus's aim as well, but he is silent on the matter, either because of respect for the lack of mention of this in the poem or for the sake of brevity.

Theodoricus deals extremely briefly with Olav's reign, confining himself to a general passage on Olav as an excellent ruler and legislator and on his work in converting the people to Christianity, summarizing the relationship between him and his namesake and predecessor Olav Tryggvason in the statement that what the first Olav had planted, the second, taught by the Holy Spirit, watered.³³ Theodoricus's brevity regarding these matters forms clear evidence that he had little information; he would have undoubtedly given more details about Olav's work for the Christianization of Norway if he had known anything about it. The later sagas are somewhat more detailed but do not appear to have had much authentic information; the stories are mostly stereotypical and may easily have been invented by the authors themselves.³⁴ Then there follows a short passage on Olav's marriage to a younger daughter of King Olof of Sweden after his engagement with her elder sister had been broken because of her father's anger, a story that is told in greater detail in the later sagas but was obviously known to Theodoricus. In the later sources, this story is combined with a poem by Sigvatr describing an embassy to Sweden; but as this poem says nothing about marriage negotiations, the combination is probably invented by the saga writers.³⁵ It is uncertain whether Theodoricus knew the poem, and if so whether he interpreted it in the same way as his successors, but it is in any case significant that the other Latin history, *Historia Norwegie*, places Olav's marriage in an entirely different context, namely during Olav's stay in England.³⁶

³² *Óláfs saga hins Helga*, ed. and trans. by Heinrichs and others, chap. 24, p. 74.

³³ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 16, pp. 28–29: 'ut quod ille magnifice plantaverat, iste sagaciter ut a Dei spiritu doctus rigaret'.

³⁴ Sverre Bagge, 'Warrior, King and Saint: The Medieval Histories of St. Óláfr', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 109. 3 (2010), 281–321 (pp. 295–97). The most detailed and vivid of these stories is the one about Dale-Gudbrand; see Theodore M. Andersson, 'Lore and Literature in a Scandinavian Conversion Episode', in *Idee, Gestalt, Geschichte: Festschrift Klaus von See. Studien zur europäischen Kulturtradition*, ed. by Gerd Wolfgang Weber (Odense: Odense University Press, 1988), pp. 261–84.

³⁵ Sverre Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 101–03. On the expedition described in the poem, see Curt Weibull, *Källkritik och historia* (Lund: Aldus & Bonner, 1964), pp. 118–37; and Moberg, *Olav Haraldsson*, pp. 88–147.

³⁶ *Historia Norwegie*, c. 28, p. 104. A Swedish king (Lacman) is mentioned by William of Jumièges as one of Cnut's allies, together with Olav (Moberg, *Olav Haraldsson*, p. 45).

Having thus summarized Olav's thirteen years on the throne in approximately half a page, Theodoricus turns to Olav's fall, giving a condensed account of the events from Cnut the Great's claim on Norway to Olav's exile in Rus' in a chapter with the heading 'On the Blessed Olav's flight to Russia'.³⁷ Here he states that Cnut, 'a man desiring what belonged to others'³⁸ and remembering that his father had possessed a third of Norway and that his nephew Hakon had been exiled, started to incite the magnates against Olav, bribing them to achieve his aim. Thus, the Norwegian magnates who ought to have fought for Olav betrayed him. Theodoricus mentions the names of three of these men: Erling Skjalgsson of Sola, Kalv Arnesson, and Tore Hund (Dog). Although it is impossible to know exactly how much Theodoricus knew of the stories included in later works, notably *Heimskringla*, he certainly knew more than only the names. His abbreviation is deliberate, determined by his emphasis on the moral aspect: Cnut wants what does not belong to him, in contrast to Olav's own behaviour in England, when he unselfishly aided Ethelred to gain the throne.

The most prominent of the three magnates mentioned by Theodoricus was Erling who, gathering a fleet, fought a battle against Olav in a place called Tunga. Here he was killed — against Olav's will — by his relative Aslak Fitjaskalle, who was one of Olav's men. The battle of Tunga and Erling's death are celebrated in a poem by Sigvatr,³⁹ which is quoted in the *Legendary Saga*, *Fagrskinna*, and *Heimskringla* and has probably been used by all later writers, including Theodoricus. The later sources recount that Erling pursued Olav, but that Olav managed to draw Erling's own ship away from the rest of his fleet and then attack him with a superior force. Fighting bravely until all his men had been killed, Erling finally surrendered, but was killed by Aslak. However, neither Sigvatr nor Theodoricus seems to know the story of Erling being dragged away from the rest of his fleet; the most likely interpretation of Theodoricus's text is that we are dealing with an ordinary battle between two fleets, although Sigvatr praises Erling's heroic fight. Sigvatr also blames Aslak for killing Erling but does not state that this was against Olav's order; this part of the story is probably a later addition. Theodoricus's brief reference must be based on a similar story to the one told in works like the *Legendary Saga* and *Heimskringla*: Erling laid down his arms and surrendered in return for receiving Olav's pardon, but Aslak rushed forward and killed him, after

³⁷ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 16, pp. 31–34.

³⁸ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 16, p. 29: 'homo cupidus alieni'.

³⁹ *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Jónsson, AI, 244–47; and AI, 228–31.

which Olav exclaimed: 'Now you struck Norway out of my hand'. In accordance with this, later sources, notably *Heimskringla*, regard Erling's death as the main cause of Olav's exile. By contrast, Theodoricus's explanation is King Cnut of Denmark's arrival shortly afterwards.⁴⁰

As do the later sources, Theodoricus now relates that Olav travelled through Sweden and arrived in Rus', where he was well received by King Jaroslav and Queen Ingegerd, Olav's former fiancée. Having learned that Earl Hakon — Cnut's deputy in Norway — had drowned on his way back from England, Olav decided to return. In contrast to the later sources, however, Theodoricus gives no details of Olav's journeys to Rus' and back. However, he does list a number of men accompanying Olav on his way back to Norway and participating in the battle of Stiklestad, as well as giving some information on Olav's adversaries.

Theodoricus also includes the basic facts about the battle. Bjørn — in later sources known as Bjørn Stallari (Marshall) — who carried Olav's banner, is killed by Tore Hund, after which Olav is killed. Theodoricus states that Olav received an immense wound, but refrains from going into further detail as there are various accounts of who wounded Olav as well as of the number of wounds, and he does not want to be caught in a lie.⁴¹ He thus knows more details than he refers to, possibly the same as in the later sources, where it is said that Olav received three wounds by three different men.⁴² Although Theodoricus differs from his successors in letting Dag Ringsson take part in the whole battle,⁴³ he has the same division into two phases, with Dag renewing the attack after Olav's death.

Once more Theodoricus comes forward as a historian in the classical tradition through these details about the military aspect of the battle and as a critical historian refusing to state exactly how Olav died, referring to diverging opinions among his sources. However, his military emphasis is balanced by his portrait of

⁴⁰ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 16, pp. 30–31; cf. *Óláfs saga hins Helga*, ed. and trans. by Heinrichs and others, chaps 63–64, pp. 52–58; and Snorri, *Heimskringla*, II, 403–10.

⁴¹ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 19, p. 41: 'nos nil temere affirmare volumus nec officioso mendacio aliorum aures demulcere' ('we do not want to state anything without foundation nor flatter other people's ears with a courteous lie').

⁴² The later sources, *Legendary Saga*, chap. 82, and Snorri, *Heimskringla*, II, 492–95, give the names of the three men who gave Olav his fatal wounds as Tore Hund, Torstein Knarresmed, and Kalv Arnesson or one of his anonymous relatives, but differ regarding their relative importance. Both Theodoricus's statement and those of his successors indicate that this was a sensitive issue even in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

⁴³ Cf. Storm's comment on p. 41 of Theodoricus, *Historia*.

Olav as a saint, his care for his enemies, and the moral and religious reasons that made him go to war. The battle of Stiklestad represents a confrontation of the two different sides of Olav: the warrior king and the Christian saint and martyr. A martyr traditionally accepted death willingly, without resisting his killers.⁴⁴ A king killed fighting might not easily be considered a martyr, although death in battle against pagans and heretics increasingly came to be regarded as martyrdom during the period of the Crusades. The later sources, notably the *Legendary Saga* and *Heimskringla*, solve this problem by letting Olav throw away his arms and accept death willingly, despite the fact that he had fought actively as well as urging his men to do so during the first phase of the battle.⁴⁵

By contrast, Theodoricus is silent about Olav's behaviour during the battle, depicting him neither as fighting nor as willingly accepting death. His argument for presenting Olav as a martyr is of a different kind, namely his purpose in fighting. Theodoricus emphasizes that Olav was fighting for justice and only went to war because he had no other option. Instead of Olav's enemies sending the false Kalv Arnesson to negotiate, as related in the later sources and possibly in the oral tradition that may have been known to Theodoricus, he lets Olav send the honest Finn, Kalv's brother, to offer his enemies peace. Only when this offer is rejected is Olav willing to fight. As in the meeting with Earl Hakon, Olav wants to avoid bloodshed, whereas his adversaries add to their guilt by stubbornly refusing to come to terms. Olav knew from divine revelation that he would die in the battle — probably an allusion to the dream told in the later sources of Olav mounting a ladder leading up to heaven.⁴⁶ He gives money for Masses to be said for those of his adversaries who die in the battle, in accordance with the biblical precept about loving one's enemies and following the example of the protomartyr Stephen, who prayed for those who stoned him to death.

⁴⁴ Erich Hoffmann, *Die heiligen Könige bei den Angelsachsen und den skandinavischen Völkern: Königsheiliger und Königshaus*, Quellen und Forschungen zu Geschichte Schleswig-Holsteins, 69 (Neumünster: Karl Wachholz, 1975), pp. 58–89; Gabor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. by Éva Pálmai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 62–113; Haki Antonsson, 'Some Observations on Martyrdom in Post-Conversion Scandinavia', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research*, 28 (2004), 70–94 (pp. 78–79); and Haki Antonsson, *St Magnús of Orkney: A Scandinavian Martyr-Cult in Context*, *The Northern World*, 29 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 103–45 and pp. 221–25.

⁴⁵ *Óláfs saga hins Helga*, ed. and trans. by Heinrichs and others, chaps 81–82; and Snorri, *Heimskringla*, II, 486–95.

⁴⁶ *Óláfs saga hins Helga*, ed. and trans. by Heinrichs and others, chap. 78, pp. 184–85; and Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, II, 470–71.

The allusion to Stephen gives the same impression as the picture in the later sources of Olav meekly and passively accepting his death, and may even be a direct allusion to such an account. However, the main emphasis is on Olav's reason for fighting. Theodoricus adds an extra passage in which he insists on Olav's saintly character and explains why he had to go to war; namely, to prevent criminals and unjust men from persecuting the good ones, to establish Christ's laws, and even, if it had been possible, to turn the hardest stones into the sons of Abraham.⁴⁷ Although in contrast to the *Passio Olavi* he does not regard Olav's enemies as pagans, he is in no doubt that Olav is fighting for justice against evil men, in accordance with the doctrine of the just war propagated by Theodoricus's superior and dedicatee, Archbishop Eystein.⁴⁸ A biblical allusion serves to emphasize this interpretation of the struggle: at Olav's arrival, the people in the region of Trøndelag 'gathered like one man against the Lord and against His Anointed'.⁴⁹

Through his picture of Olav as the *rex iustus* and his death at Stiklestad as martyrdom for the cause of justice, Theodoricus firmly places Olav's life and reign in the history of salvation. Turning directly to his audience, addressed as 'universi populi', he points to his hero, born in the most faraway region to the north among barbarous and uncivilized peoples, shining like a star in humility and brilliance despite being a king and not a slave.⁵⁰ Thus, the distant country that has recently been included into Christendom has now been distinguished by a saint of equal brilliance as those of the old Christian countries.

Olav's importance and the turning point his death represents are further emphasized through the digressions which fill more than half of Theodoricus's account of Olav. The first two of these come in connection with Hakon's death at

⁴⁷ An allusion to Luke 3. 8 where John the Baptist tells the Jews, who boast of being the sons of Abraham, that God can turn stones into the sons of Abraham. Theodoricus turns the quotation into a characterization of Olav's missionary zeal, aiming at softening hearts of stone.

⁴⁸ Antonsson, 'Some Observations', pp. 79–87; Sverre Bagge, 'Den heroiske tid: kirkereform og kirkekamp 1153–1214', in *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153–1537: Søkelys på Nidaroskirkens og Nidarosprovinsens historie*, ed. by Steinar Imsen, Senter for middelalderstudier, NTNU Skrifter, 5 (Trondheim: Tapir, 2003), pp. 47–80 (p. 69).

⁴⁹ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 19, p. 39: 'convenerunt [...] quasi vir unus adversus Dominum et adversum christum ejus'; cf. Psalm 2. 1 and Acts 4. 26: 'et principes convenerunt in unum adversus Dominum et adversus Christum eius'.

⁵⁰ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 19, p. 40: 'Audite hæc, obsecro, universi populi: vir ist natus pæne in ultimis partibus aquilonis inter barbaros et incultos. Videte quale sidus emicuerit, quam humilis, quam sublimis, et hoc non in servili conditione, sed in regali fastidio.'

the end of Chapter 16 and fill the whole of Chapter 17, serving to place the coming struggle in the perspective of universal salvation history. On his return from Norway to England, Hakon is driven by a gale into the maelstrom (Charybdis) of Petlandsfjord, where he is shipwrecked and drowned. Theodoricus now turns to an account of the nature of Charybdis which, with references to the Bible and various classical authors, he describes as the deep waters located inside the earth. One of his sources for this piece of information is Paul the Deacon, who has also written about Pannonia and the people who invaded Italy from there, the Huns. This in turn leads to another digression on barbarian peoples bursting forth from one area in the same way as the waters within the earth and causing the martyrdom of St Ursula and a multitude of others in Cologne.

The link between Charybdis and the Huns is not only that Paul the Deacon happens to write about both of them, but also that they are both forces of disaster bursting forth from some distant place, forces which are then shown to play a part in God's plan. God justly punishes Earl Hakon, who had earlier resigned his realm in favour of Olav in return for his life, but had broken his promise and returned as Cnut's deputy at Olav's exile. The forces of evil, human as well as non-human, may thus be God's instrument in punishing the wicked, but they may also turn against the just who suffer martyrdom for God's sake, like Ursula and her followers. However, martyrdom is a victory; Cologne is liberated thanks to the blessed virgins, and the barbarian hordes turn away and flee. In this way, the digression prepares for another martyrdom, that of Olav himself. Theodoricus ends by commenting that defeat was turned into victory, as in the case of Cologne after Ursula's martyrdom. Olav's martyrdom means the final victory for Christianity in Norway, and after a brief interlude of Danish rule, Olav is succeeded by his son Magnus. Finally, numerous miracles happen thanks to Olav's intervention.

Moreover, in connection with the statement that Olav's army consisted of strong and tall men, Theodoricus turns to a new digression on the diminishing size of men, an observation that is supported by a quotation from Pliny. This fact is in turn an indication of the coming end of the world, which is developed in a later passage in which Theodoricus — drawing on the doctrine of the four elements — contrasts God's eternal simplicity with the composite and therefore perishable character of the world.⁵¹ Having given the exact date of Olav's death as 1029

⁵¹ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 18, pp. 36–37. There is a similar passage in Otto of Freising, *Ottonis et Rahewini Gesta Frederici I Imperatoris*, I. 5, ed. by Georg Waitz and B. von Simson, MGH SRG, 46 (Hannover: Hahn, 1912), pp. 16–23; cf. Sverre Bagge, 'Ideas and Narrative in Otto of Freising's *Gesta Frederici*', *Journal of Medieval History*, 22 (1996), 345–77 (p. 373); and Sverre Bagge, *Kings*,

according to the Roman calendar and the year of the incarnation, Theodoricus turns to a new digression on reckoning the dates from the Creation of the world.⁵² He quotes several authorities — Eusebius, Isidore, Remigius, Jerome, and Hugh of St Victor — who have calculated the time from the Creation to the birth of Christ, but draws no conclusion, thus seemingly presenting a useless and irrelevant show of learning. However, both digressions serve to emphasize Olav's importance in the context of universal history. Like the later saga writers, Theodoricus rarely uses the 'absolute', Christian chronology, keeping mostly to relative chronology based on the kings' reigns. In addition to the battle of Stiklestad, only two other events are dated in this way: Harald Fairhair's accession to the throne (852 or 858, according to Theodoricus)⁵³ and the battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066, where King Harold Godwinson of England defeated the Norwegian king Harald. The former date marks the beginning of Norwegian history proper; the latter concerns a crucial event where the Norwegians intervened in the general history of Western Christendom. The battle of Stiklestad, which marks the birth of a Christian martyr as well as the final inclusion of Norway into Western Christendom, is of even greater importance than the two other events. Consequently, it necessitates not only a date according to the Christian calendar but also a discussion about the origin of the world and the general problem of chronology.

The end of the world is also a proper subject to discuss in connection with the beginning of the world, but the main reason for introducing this subject in connection with Olav's death is the eschatological interpretation inherent in Theodoricus's work. According to the Bible,⁵⁴ the Gospel shall have reached all peoples on earth before the end. The Christianization of Norway, a country on the utmost edge of the inhabited land, might therefore be interpreted as a sign of the coming end. The second half of Theodoricus's work also contains features pointing in this direction. The introduction of Christianity is not depicted simply as a change from darkness to light. Theodoricus's account of the hundred years following the battle of Stiklestad depicts bad as well as good kings, but ends in a tone of deep

Politics, pp. 383–86. As Otto had also studied in Paris, the schools there, and particularly the one of St Victor, seem to have been a likely source of inspiration for both authors. A closer examination of historical writings at St Victor is a desideratum in future studies of Theodoricus, but cannot be attempted here.

⁵² Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 20, pp. 42–43.

⁵³ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 1, p. 6. The year differs in the manuscripts; see Storm's comment on p. 6 and Bagge, 'Theodoricus', p. 114.

⁵⁴ Matthew 24. 14.

pessimism. Theodoricus abstains from continuing the story up to his own time because of the disasters resulting from the dynastic struggles starting in the 1130s, and ends his work with quotations from Ovid and Lucan on the disasters, respectively, of the Iron Age and the civil wars in Rome.⁵⁵

St Olav was one of the royal saints characteristic of the countries converted between the tenth and the twelfth centuries: Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Hungary, and Bohemia — only Poland lacks a royal saint. Like his counterparts in the other countries, Olav received his hagiography in the traditional style in the *Passio Olavi*, but in addition there is also an unusually strong secular tradition about him, dealing with numerous episodes from his life as a Viking as well as a king and focusing on his qualities as a warrior and a leader of men. Most of the extant written accounts try in various ways to reconcile this picture with that of the saint; the most famous is Snorri's version, where chronology plays a crucial part, giving three successive portraits of Olav as, respectively, the Viking, the king, and the saint.⁵⁶ Theodoricus solves the problem in a different way. Most of the exact facts mentioned in his work concern the 'secular' Olav: his stay in England, the way in which he made himself the king of Norway, the battle of Tunga against Erling Skjalgsson, and his death in the battle of Stiklestad. Unlike in the *Passio Olavi*, Theodoricus does not try to hide the secular Olav, but he gives his secular career a thoroughly religious interpretation. Olav the warrior fights for a just cause from the beginning, starting with aiding King Ethelred of England to regain his throne. Olav's own conquest of Norway takes place as the result of God's vocation. In trying to regain his kingdom, he fights a necessary battle against evil men who want to destroy his work for justice and Christianity. He consistently tries to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, in Saudungssund, at Tunga, and at Stiklestad, only resorting to the use of arms when there is no other possibility. Thus, Theodoricus does not write hagiography, but secular history with a religious interpretation.

Theodoricus as Historian

W. P. Ker has characterized the difference between Latin and Old Norse historiography in the following way:

These two books [Theodoricus's history and the *Historia Norwegie*] might be picked out of the Middle Ages on purpose to make a contrast of their style with the Icelandic saga. Th.

⁵⁵ Theodoricus, *Historia*, c. 34, p. 67; and Bagge, 'Theodoricus', p. 122.

⁵⁶ Bagge, *Society and Politics*, pp. 181–86.

[...] indulges in all the favourite medieval irrelevances, drags in the Roman historians and the Platonic year, digresses from Charybdis to the Huns, and embroiders his texts with quotations from the Latin poets.⁵⁷

Ker adequately expresses the modern ideals of narrative style as well as good historical writing, according to which Theodoricus fails completely in comparison with the Icelandic kings' sagas, with Snorri's *Heimskringla* as the great masterpiece. Although the previous examination has not attempted to diminish the difference between Snorri and Theodoricus, it has argued for a more positive picture of the latter.

In contrast to the *Passio Olavi*, his work is not pure hagiography, but contains serious attempts at a factual account of 'normal' political history, based on reigns rather than royal biographies, according to the classical tradition. He refuses to deal with the history before Harald Fairhair because there is no certain information on this period. He thus seems to deliberately reject the ancient poem *Ynglingatal*, used by the author of the *Historia Norwegie* and later by Snorri. He sometimes presents more than one version of the same story, adding that he does not know which one is the true one. Above all, his work includes a surprising amount of facts — many more than in the *Historia Norwegie* — such as names, places, and events, which are only briefly mentioned with few if any details. He keeps to a dry and matter-of-fact style, but has obviously known far more than he tells directly. His narrative gives evidence that much of the material included in the longer, vernacular narratives of Oddr Snorrason, Snorri, and others must have existed in oral or written form around 1180. His genre is history or possibly chronicle, clearly distinct from hagiography,⁵⁸ despite the ideological similarity between his work and the *Passio Olavi*. Theodoricus presents a considerable amount of details about secular history, attempting to sort out chronology and evaluate the evidence according to contemporary critical standards so as to arrive at correct information. He presents his material according to clear criteria about relevance and avoids the repetitions and inconsistencies of writers like Oddr Snorrason and the author of the *Legendary Saga*. In this way, he aims at creating a consistent picture of the great king and

⁵⁷ William Paton Ker, 'The Early Historians of Norway', in *Collected Essays*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1925), II, 131–51 (pp. 141–42).

⁵⁸ Felice Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre: Hagiographical Texts as Historical Narrative', *Viator*, 25 (1994), 95–113, rejects the distinction, at least before the twelfth century, when beginning state formation made political history possible. However, despite a certain amount of overlapping in practice, the distinction is clearly stated e.g. in Einhard's and Wipo's prefaces; see Bagge, *Kings, Politics*, pp. 23–24 and 190–91.

saint. Most importantly, his digressions and biblical and classical allusions are not random outbursts of useless learning, but rather attempts at a theological interpretation of the history of his country and at integrating the life and reign of a saint and ruler at the outskirts of the inhabited earth, unknown to most of his European contemporaries, into the universal history of salvation. Theodoricus's work is diametrically opposed to that of Snorri, but together the two demonstrate the rich historiographic tradition of the northern world.

Part Two

Early Scandinavian Historical Narratives in Old Norse

THE TWO AGES IN *ÁGRIP AF NÓREGS KONUNGA SÖGUM*

Theodore M. Andersson

The research on *Ágrip* is in some respects in agreement and in other respects quite divided. There is a fair consensus that the archaisms in the only extant manuscript suggest a date in the first half of the thirteenth century, and the language makes it reasonably certain that the manuscript is Icelandic, although a few Norwegianisms have persuaded some scholars that the exemplar was Norwegian.¹ There is also general agreement that the book was probably composed in the period 1190–1200 because, it has been argued, it is quoted not only in the great

¹ The idea that the book is Norwegian goes back to *Brudstykke af en gammel norsk kongesaga*, ed. by Peter A. Munch, *Samlinger til det norske folks sprog og historie*, 2 (Christiania: Samfundet til det norske folks sprog og historie, 1834), p. 275. It was reinforced by Gustav Storm, *Snorre Sturlassøns historieskrivning: En kritisk undersøgelse* (Copenhagen: Bianco Lunos Bogtrykkeri, 1873), pp. 24–26, and in his simultaneous paper ‘Yderligere bemærkninger om den skotske “Historia Norvegiae”’, *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie*, 8 (1873), 361–85 (p. 85); and in *Ágrip af Noregs konunga sögum*, ed. by Verner Dahlerup, *Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur*, 2 (Copenhagen: Møller, 1880), p. xxxiii. It was argued in detail by Gustav Indrebø, ‘Aagrip’, *Edda*, 17 (1922), 18–65 (pp. 25–29, 46, 57–58, and 61). Icelandic origin was argued by Finnur Jónsson in *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, vol. II (Copenhagen: Gad, 1923), p. 619; in Finnur Jónsson, ‘Ágrip’, *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie*, 3rd ser., 18 (1928), 312–14; and in *Ágrip*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, *Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek*, 18 (Halle [Saale]: Niemeyer, 1929), p. xiii. Finnur did not think that the few Norwegianisms in the manuscript were significant (*Ágrip*, p. ix), but the view that the book is Norwegian has nonetheless persisted, e.g., in Svend Ellehøj, *Studier over den ældste norrøne historieskrivning* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1965), p. 198. In *Ágrip af Noregskonunga sögum: Fagrskinna – Noregs konunga tal*, ed. by Bjarni Einarsson, *Íslenzka fornrit*, 29 (Reykjavik: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1985), p. vi, Bjarni goes only so far as to say that the exemplar of the extant manuscript was probably Norwegian.

compendia *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna*, and *Heimskringla* but also in the *Oldest Saga of St Olaf (c. 1200) and in the Icelandic translation of Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, which is often dated c. 1200.² This dating of *Ágrip* seems, however, somewhat uncertain. There is no way to prove that the *Oldest Saga of St Olav was written and Oddr Snorrason translated as early as 1200, and Gudrun Lange believes that the author of *Ágrip* made use of both of these books rather than vice versa. The fact that *Ágrip* is written in the vernacular, as opposed to the other synoptic histories and the original of Oddr Snorrason's book, might also tend to favour a later date. It appears that in the 1180s and 1190s Latin was still a possible medium, but that after 1200 everything was written in the vernacular.

In other areas the uncertainty is even greater. There has been much discussion about how *Ágrip* is related to its closest congeners, the *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* by Theodoricus Monachus and the *Historia Norwegie* (hereafter *HN*), and some disagreement about whether the author was Norwegian or Icelandic. On the first point there is no doubt that the extensive verbal echoes shared by these documents ensures a textual relationship, but scholars have differed on whether the author of *Ágrip* made direct use of Theodoricus (and perhaps *HN*) or whether the verbal correspondences are inherited from common sources.³ If

² See Konrad Maurer, *Ueber die Ausdrücke: altnordische, altnorwegische & isländische Sprache*, Abhandlungen der phil.-philol. Cl. der Königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 21 (Munich: K. Akademie, 1868), pp. 620–40; Sigurður Nordal, *Om Olaf den belliges saga: En kritisk undersøgelse* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1914), pp. 31, 35–38, and 44–46; Indrebø, 'Aagrip', pp. 23 and 60; Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, p. 612; and Finnur Jónsson, 'Ágrip', pp. 295–96; Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Om de norske kongers sagaer*, Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo II. hist.-filos. klasse 1936 (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1937), pp. 57–58; Jónas Kristjánsson, *Um Fóstbræðrasögu* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1972), pp. 149–50; and Gudrun Lange, *Die Anfänge der isländisch-norwegischen Geschichtsschreibung*, *Studia Islandica*, 47 (Reykjavík: Bókautgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1989), pp. 123–24, 166, 171–73, and 176.

³ Sophus Bugge, 'Bemærkninger om den i Skotland fundne latinske Norges krønike', *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie*, 8 (1873), pp. 1–49 (pp. 2–4, 11, and 18), thought that *Ágrip* and *HN* used a common source but that the author of *Ágrip* did not know Theodoricus. Storm, 'Yderligere bemærkninger', p. 368, thought that *HN* was a direct source for *Ágrip* and Storm, *Snorre Sturlassons historieskrivning*, pp. 22 and 27, that Theodoricus was also an immediate source for *Ágrip*. Nordal, *Om Olaf den belliges saga*, pp. 30 and 41–42, thought that *Ágrip* made direct use of Theodoricus and shared a common source with *HN*. Indrebø, 'Aagrip', pp. 46–47 and 49, thought that *Ágrip* made direct use of Theodoricus and could have used *HN* directly or, alternatively, a common source. Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, pp. 615–16, and 'Ágrip', pp. 269–73 and 309, thought that *Ágrip* used neither Theodoricus nor *HN* directly but that the common source for *Ágrip* and Theodoricus could have been Sæmundr. He

there is a new consensus in the making, it is that the author of *Ágrip* drew at least on Sæmundr and Ari.

On the second point, the positing of Norwegian authorship rests not only on the few Norwegianisms in the manuscript but also on the perception of a special familiarity with the Trondheim region and even a hint of Norwegian patriotism.⁴ These factors are subject to some doubt because an Icelander could have been familiar with the Trondheim region and could also have had Norwegian sympathies.⁵ There is a certain afterglow of Norwegian national emergence in the emphasis on Norwegianness, and the counterargument might be that most of what we know about the writing on Norwegian kings in the twelfth century suggests Icelandic authorship: Sæmundr Sigfússon, Ari Þorgilsson, Eiríkr Oddsson, Oddr Snorrason, Gunnlaugr Leifsson, and Karl Jónsson were all Icelanders. In a case of doubt there is therefore a certain weight of evidence in favour of Icelandic origin.

Scholars have made it quite easy to survey the material bearing on the sources of *Ágrip*. Tor Ulset gives a succinct summary of earlier views, including a good number not reviewed here, and prints the parallel passages in an appendix.⁶ There may, however, be insufficient evidence to anchor his view that certain Latinisms

also thought that there was a common source for *Ágrip* and *HN* (*Ágrip af Noregs konunga sögum*, ed. by Dahlerup, p. xii). Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Om de norske kongers sagaer*, pp. 5 and 9–11, thought that *Ágrip* made direct use of Theodoricus and could have used *HN* directly or made use of a common source, though he leans to the common source. Ellehøj, *Studier*, pp. 199–200, 203–36, 238, 240–58, 263, and 265–66, believes that the author of *Ágrip* made direct use of Theodoricus and shared a common source with *HN* that may well have been Ari's *konunga ævi*, though he also used Sæmundr. Tor Ulset, *Det genetiske forholdet mellom Ágrip, Historia Norwegiae og De Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium: En analyse med utgangspunkt i oversettelsesteknikk samt en diskusjon omkring begrepet 'latinisme' i samband med norrøne tekster* (Oslo: Novus, 1983), reverted to the idea that *Ágrip* made direct use of both Theodoricus and *HN*. Theodore M. Andersson, 'Kings' Sagas (*Konungasögur*)', in *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Carol J. Clover and John Lindow (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985; repr. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2005), pp. 197–238 (pp. 201–11), reviewed Ellehøj and suggested that *Ágrip* used both Sæmundr and Ari, and Lange, *Die Anfänge*, pp. 123–24, 166, 170–73, 176, and 178, allowed for the use of both Sæmundr and Ari, but also counted the *Oldest Saga of St Olaf and Oddr Snorrason among the sources of *Ágrip*.

⁴ Indrebø, 'Aagrip', was the most explicit and detailed on the Norwegian orientation. See especially pp. 37–40.

⁵ See the tempering remarks provided by Finnur Jónsson, 'Ágrip', pp. 312–14.

⁶ Ulset, *Det genetiske forholdet*, pp. 16–42 and pp. 152–82.

in *Ágrip* betray the direct use of Theodoricus and *HN*.⁷ He was also not yet aware of all the arguments to the effect that Theodoricus could have used Icelandic written sources also available to the author of *Ágrip*.⁸ Svend Ellehøj also made the material accessible by printing the parallel passages with a full discussion, but his own argument that the common source for *Ágrip* and *HN* was Ari's *konunga ævi* does not dispel all the uncertainties.⁹

The underlying problem in the analysis to date is that the verbal echoes in Theodoricus, *HN*, and *Ágrip* are sufficient to persuade all scholars (with the exception of Siegfried Beyschlag) that there is a scribal relationship, but that the match in wording is never so close that direct copying imposes itself as the only solution.¹⁰ The possibility that the echoes can be explained from the use of common written sources is always open. This latter explanation has become even more plausible since the argument has been made that Theodoricus, despite his apparent allegation of oral sources, may well have used written sources as well.

The problem is also connected with our view of where *Ágrip* was written. If *Ágrip* is Norwegian, it might well be judged to be dependent solely on Theodoricus and *HN* and quite independent of the Icelandic tradition represented by Sæmundr and Ari. If, on the other hand, it is Icelandic, as the extant manuscript and the preponderant role of Icelanders in vernacular history writing might suggest, it is difficult to imagine that an Icelander writing about Norwegian kings in the 1190s or a little later would not have known Sæmundr and Ari. Oddr Snorrason, who seems to have been contemporary with the author of *Ágrip*, refers to both Sæmundr and Ari, and later writers knew them as well. The simplest solution to the complex problem may therefore be that Theodoricus and the authors of *HN* and *Ágrip* all knew and made use of Sæmundr and Ari, so that the verbal correspondences reflect this use.

⁷ See the review of Ulset's *Det genetiske forholdet* by Theodore M. Andersson in *Scandinavian Studies*, 56 (1984), 372–74.

⁸ See Bjarni Guðnason, 'Theodoricus og íslenskir sagnaritarar', in *Sjötlu ritgerðir helgaðar Jakobi Benediktssyni 20 júlí 1977*, ed. by Einar G. Pétursson and Jónas Kristjánsson, 2 vols (Reykjavik: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1977), I, 107–20; and Theodore M. Andersson, 'Ari's *konunga ævi* and the Earliest Accounts of Hákon jarl's Death', in *Opuscula*, vol. VI, Bibliotheca Arnarnagaeana, 33 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1979), pp. 1–17.

⁹ See Ellehøj, *Studier*, pp. 203–36; and Andersson, 'Kings' Sagas (*Konungasögur*)', pp. 201–11.

¹⁰ See Siegfried Beyschlag, *Konungasögur: Untersuchungen zur Königssaga bis Snorri. Die älteren Übersichtswerke samt Ynglingasaga*, Bibliotheca Arnarnagaeana, 8 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1950), and the response by Ellehøj, *Studier*, pp. 200–02.

The present chapter is not, however, a renewed inquiry into the literary affiliations of *Ágrip*. It proposes instead a reading of *Ágrip* as a whole. Despite impressively detailed analyses notably by Gustav Indrebø, Finnur Jónsson, and Svend Ellehøj there has thus far been no interpretive approach to the text, and that is what I hope to remedy. One point on which all scholars seem to agree is that the author of *Ágrip* was a cleric, and that will be my point of departure.¹¹ The question to be addressed is whether the author's clerical outlook has a particular focus.¹²

The Shape of History in Ágrip

For the sake of articulation I will consider the narrative in three chronological subsections: (1) the kings before the Olavs; (2) the Olavs; (3) the kings after the Olavs. The 135 years in the first subsection and the 35 years in the second subsection (including the Danish interregna 1000–15 and 1028–30) are roughly equivalent in length, but the third subsection covering the years 1030 down to the hypothetical concluding date of 1177 (a total of 147 years) was much longer. Exactly how much longer we do not know because an unknown number of leaves is missing at the end of the manuscript. Despite the relative brevity of the reigns of Olav Tryggvason and Olav Haraldsson it is clear that they get more extensive coverage than the earlier or later kings. We will also see that they are the pivot of the narrative and that the early reigns differ greatly from the Olavian era and what follows.

The Period c. 860 to 995 from Harald Fairhair to Olav Tryggvason

The extant part of the first leaf in the manuscript begins with the death of Halfdan the Black and the succession of Harald Fairhair. It tells of the curious alteration of Harald's cognomen from *lúfa* to *hárfagri* and is then oddly preoccupied with the story of his marriage to the Finnish (Lappish) woman Snjófríðr, with whom he becomes so infatuated and whose death he mourns so inordinately that he is

¹¹ See Maurer, *Ueber die Ausdrücke*, p. 491; Storm, 'Yderligere bemærkninger', p. 385; Indrebø, 'Aagrip', pp. 19 and 55; Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, p. 619; *Ágrip af Noregs konunga sögum*, ed. by Dahlerup, p. x; Ellehøj, *Studier*, p. 198; Ulset, *Det genetiske forholdet*, pp. 10–11; and Lange, *Die Anfänge*, p. 164.

¹² The most palpable examples of a special Christian preoccupation in the text may be reviewed in Matthew J. Driscoll's edition: *Ágrip*, pp. 2, 8–10, 14–16, 24, 30, 34–36, 42, 46–48, and 72. It can also be noted that the author regularly records in what churches the kings were buried.

effectively disabled and must be restored to sanity by the wise counsel of Þorleifr spaki. The implication is clearly that he is the victim of Lappish magic. The curiosity is not so much that the story is told but that it excludes all other information; Harald's epoch-making unification of Norway is relegated to a single sentence.¹³

The narrative then passes abruptly to Harald's two sons Erik Bloodax and Hakon the Good. The traditional epithet 'the Good', which we find for example in *Egils saga*,¹⁴ is suppressed in *Ágrip*, but in the case of Erik the author again shows a preoccupation with the cognomina of kings. His very brief account of Erik's reign focuses on an explanation of 'Bloodax' and attributes it to Erik's killing of his brothers. But he is also preoccupied with the baleful influence of women and accounts for Erik's murderous activities mostly on the basis of his wife Gunnhild's advice. The theme of malevolent women is also pursued in the life of Hakon. Since he came of age in England, later histories celebrate him as a Christian before his time, who was forced to make minor concessions to his pagan countrymen. The author of *Ágrip* is concerned with his having made too many concessions:

En hann var kristinn ok átti konu heiðna ok veik mjök af kristninni fyrir hennar sakar ok fyrir vildar sakar við lýðinn er á mót stóð kristninni.

[But he [Hakon] was a Christian who was married to a heathen wife and deviated greatly from Christianity for her sake and to please the people who opposed Christianity.]¹⁵

Ágrip is the only source to mention a heathen wife and therefore the only one to blame her for Hakon's aberrations. The author goes on to say that after Hakon participated in heathen ceremonies, everything went worse for him. He therefore emerges as a backslider who pays a price for his apostasy.

Hakon ultimately falls in battle against his brother Harald Greycloak, who stages a return from England to Norway with his mother Gunnhild. She again becomes a central figure. With the use of sorcery she dispatches a servant boy to inflict a fatal wound on Hakon with a bowshot. Hakon's retainers offer to return his body to the Christian land of England, but he is conscious of his apostasy and replies:

'Ek em eigi þess verðr,' kvað hann. 'Svá lifða ek sem heiðnir menn í mǫrgu, skal mik ok fyrir því svá jarða sem heiðna menn. Vætti ek mér þaðan af meiri miskunnar af guði sjálfum en ek sjá verðr.'

¹³ The disproportion has not gone unnoticed. See Nordal, *Om Olaf den helliges saga*, p. 30; Finnur Jónsson, 'Ágrip', p. 282; and *Ágrip*, p. x.

¹⁴ *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, Íslensk fornrit, 2 (Reykjavik: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 1933), p. 127.

¹⁵ *Ágrip*, p. 8.

['I am not worthy of that,' he said. 'In many ways I have lived like the heathens, and for that reason I should be buried like the heathens. I should wish from now on for greater mercy from God Himself than I am worthy of.']¹⁶

This is not the end of Gunnhild's role as power behind the throne. We learn that she continues to guide Erik Bloodaxe's destiny in Northumbria, where, at her instigation, 'he became once again so fierce and harsh toward his people that it seemed they could hardly endure him'.¹⁷ Erik eventually succumbs on a raiding expedition in Spain, and Gunnhild presides over the growth to adulthood of her sons in Denmark. Among these sons Harald Greycloak is the leading figure, and he succeeds Hakon on the Norwegian throne. He too suffers Gunnhild's domination and deals so harshly with the people that they rebel. His rule is remembered as a time of famine and tyranny, clearly inspired by Gunnhild.

But Gunnhild is not the only embodiment of iniquity in the story. The Danish king Harald (Bluetooth) Gormsson lures Harald Greycloak to the Limfjord and incites his nephew Gull-Haraldr (Gold Harald) against him. Harald Greycloak falls in the ensuing battle, but Gull-Haraldr in turn falls victim to Jarl Hakon (Sigurðarson), who now takes over the rule of Norway. The depth of the conspiracy between Harald Gormsson and Jarl Hakon is revealed in detail only in later sources (notably *Fagrskinna*), but deceit and duplicity clearly underlie the dynastic history of Norway in *Ágrip*.

Jarl Hakon is indeed a mastermind of deception, to such an extent that he is even able to outmanoeuvre the formidable Gunnhild by contriving a marriage project for her with the Danish king, but no sooner does she arrive in Denmark than her ostensible betrothed ends her days by sinking her in a swamp. It is a story of deceit surpassed by greater deceit and ascending wickedness. Hakon would appear to have no more heights of evil-doing to scale and no more depths of depravity to probe, but there is more to come. Unlike later sources that grant Hakon an interlude of popular favour, *Ágrip* describes his rule as characterized by tyranny and unpopularity from the outset and plunges him directly into the moral morass occasioned by his predation on the women of his realm and leading to his demise in a pigsty. Unlike other versions of the story, *Ágrip* does not even give him the moral benefit of betrayal by a slave. Instead he volunteers his throat to be cut by his slave: 'and thus a man of filthy ways ended his days and rule in a house of filth'.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Ágrip*, pp. 14–16.

¹⁷ *Ágrip*, p. 16.

¹⁸ *Ágrip*, p. 24.

Ágrip is the only text to employ this somewhat obvious moral metaphor. After his death Hakon's head is severed, exhibited in public, and pelted with stones. Thus the early history of Norwegian royalty culminates in a pigsty and public disgrace.

There are clear threads in this historical exposition: autocracy, gynecocracy, sorcery, apostasy, and political assassination. But the tone changes radically when we come to the era of the Olavs. After the death of the petty king Tryggvi, who, according to some, died by the evil counsel of Gunnhild, his widow escapes to Orkney with her three-year-old son Olav. Fearing the reprisals of Gunnhild and her sons or Jarl Hakon (still living at the time), she sends her son to Sweden in the care of a faithful retainer. From here he is to be brought to Kiev, but on the way his ship is captured by pirates, who kill his guardian and sell the boy into slavery.

The Era of the Olavs, 995 to 1030

With the advent of Olav Tryggvason the dense clouds of evil begin to lift and the language takes on a new colour: 'But God, who had chosen this child for great deeds, arranged his release.'¹⁹ He is brought to Kiev after all, where he avenges the slaying of his guardian and, despite the prevailing rules of sanctuary, is granted the protection of the king. He in turn becomes a pirate and a raider, but this activity is touched on lightly and leads him ultimately to a hermit who presides over his conversion. The narrative is curiously lean: 'Everything went according to this prediction, and thus he came to the faith and then to Norway' (a nice illustration of the author's taste for *zeugma*).²⁰

The account of his reign amounts to no more than thirteen lines and tells only that he spread the faith in Norway and converted five countries. Then the story turns to the events leading up to Olav's death, which is motivated by a falling out with the Danish king and an ensuing naval ambush. The narrative as a whole is not so much short as it is spare, embracing childhood, Christian mission, and death. That is to say, the story adheres to the normal hagiographic pattern. Indeed, the author reports that some believe that Olav ended his life in a monastery in the Holy Land: 'But however his life ended, it is likely that God has his soul.'²¹

Olav's successors under the Danish king Cnut try to revive paganism and would have succeeded if God had not shown his mercy with the arrival of Olav, the son

¹⁹ *Ágrip*, p. 28.

²⁰ *Ágrip*, p. 30.

²¹ *Ágrip*, p. 34.

of Harald grenski (from Grenland). Later accounts tell at some length how this Olav also began his career as a pirate and raider, but the author of *Ágrip* again muffles this bad beginning in a single sentence: 'Much is told about the wide extent of Olav's travels, but no matter how widely he traveled, he returned immediately when it was God's wish to make the realm open to him.'²² Thus the viking youths of both Olavs are sanitized under the new dispensation. Olav Haraldsson's capture of Hakon Eiríksson at Saudungssund and his victory at Nesjar are summarized briefly, but of greater moment is his strengthening of the realm 'with Christianity and all good values'.²³ There follows a quite abbreviated report of Olav's betrothal to one Swedish princess and his marriage to another.

As in the case of Olav Trygvason, the narrative now presses on rapidly to St Olav's latter days, King Cnut's suborning of the Norwegian chieftains, the fateful death of Erling Skjalgsson, and Olav's overland escape to the East. There is also a digression on the evil days that befall Norway under Alfifa and her son Sveinn, a throwback to the gynecocratic era of preconversion history. Ultimately Olav returns to Norway only to succumb in battle to his assembled enemies.

Unlike their pagan forefathers, both Olavs seem to be enveloped in a cloak of sanctity. There is not a critical word on either, and both leave behind a spotless reputation. Olav Trygvason is described in the following terms:

Óláfr var mikill maðr, hár, sýniligr, hvítr á hárslit allan, rétthærðr ok manna snøriligastr ok bezt at sér gørr í allri korteisi.

[Olav was a large man, tall and good-looking, altogether blond and with straight hair, the most vigorous of men and most accomplished in courtly manners.]²⁴

Olav Haraldsson is no less outstanding:

Óláfr var fríðr sýnum ok listuligr, jarpt [0] hár hafði hann ok rauðara skegg, riðvaxinn meðalmaðr, [00] ekki hár. Hann var á XX. aldri er hann kom í Nóreg, ok sýndisk vitrum mǫnnum í Nóregi hann mikit afbragð í vizku sinni, ok ǫllum vaskleik um hvern mann fram.

[Olav was of fair and fine appearance, with dark hair and a redder beard, a compact man of medium height, not tall. He was twenty years of age when he came to Norway, and he struck the men of good judgement in Norway as outstanding in his intelligence and in matters of valour in advance of all others.]²⁵

²² *Ágrip*, p. 34.

²³ *Ágrip*, p. 36.

²⁴ *Ágrip*, p. 32.

²⁵ *Ágrip*, p. 38.

For the author of *Ágrip* both men are paragons, but later writers will sketch more mixed portraits; Olav Tryggvason tortures his pagan countrymen, and Olav Haraldsson harbours secret designs on Iceland and is not faultless in his dealings with the Norwegian magnates. These shades are not visible in *Ágrip*, which is clearly intent on maximizing the contrast between the Christian Olavs and their morally flawed pagan ancestors.

The Later Kings, 1030 to c. 1130

The Christian premises persist in the narrative that follows. When God begins to stage miracles in honour of St Olav, the Norwegians repent and send to Rus' to recall his son Magnus to the throne. At first Magnus deals harshly with the Norwegians because of the violence done to his father, but God tempers his disposition and inclines him to mercy, with the result that he gains great popularity and becomes known as 'the Good'. With words reminiscent of those used to describe St Olav's reign, the author relates that Magnus promoted laws and all good customs and strengthened Christianity.²⁶ He also harbours resentment toward the Danes for wrongs committed against his father, but good men intervene and bring about a peaceful settlement. On the death of the Danish king, Magnus succeeds unopposed to the Danish throne, but he is challenged by Sven Estridsen (Sveinn Úlfsson). Two great battles are fought at Helganes and on Hlýrskógsheiðr. Just before the second encounter St Olav appears to Magnus in a dream and assures him of victory; once again divine auspices loom large in the trajectory of history.

Not only the shaping of events but also the shaping of character seems to favour the Norwegians. The most striking case of character reform is King Harald Hardrada (Haraldr Sigurðarson), who appears in later sources as both unusually deceitful and wilful. There is no hint of this detraction in *Ágrip*. Harald returns to Norway and rules with Magnus in what appears to be perfect harmony. There is no mention of his threatened defection to King Sven in Denmark or his persistent tensions with Magnus during their joint rule, moments clearly profiled in later versions. In particular there is no reference to his military ruses in the Mediterranean, his coveting of the Danish realm, or his assassination of Einarr Þambarskelfir and Einarr's son. His projected conquest of England is portrayed not as an act of hubris but merely as a collaborative venture. In later sagas Harald is the most ambiguous figure in early Norwegian dynastic history, but there is no trace

²⁶ *Ágrip*, pp. 36 and 48.

of this ambiguity in *Ágrip*. There is, for example, no suggestion that his death at Stamford Bridge might stand in some relation to his character. Nor is there much indication that the long, peaceful, generous, and popular rule of his son Olav the Quiet (Óláfr kyrr) should be seen as a calculated contrast to the rule of his father.

There is, however, one notable departure from the otherwise positive construction of King Harald's career. The very short account of Olav the Quiet's reign includes a disproportionately long statement on the difference between Harald and Olav in a phrasing attributed to Olav himself:

'Hví,' kvað hann, 'skal ek nú eigi vera kátr, er ek sé bæði á lýð mínum kæti ok frelsi, ok sit ek í samkundu þeiri er helguð er helgum fǫðurbróður mínum. Um daga fǫður míns þá var lýðr undir aga miklum ok ótta, ok fǫlu flestir menn gull sitt ok gersimar, en ek sé nú at á hverjum skínn er á, ok er þeira frelsi mín gleði.'

[‘Why,’ he said, ‘should I not be happy when I see in my people both happiness and freedom and when I sit at this feast dedicated to my sainted uncle. In the days of my father the people lived in great fear and terror and most people hid their gold and treasures, but now I can see that whatever people have sparkles on their persons, and their release is my joy.’]²⁷

This comment suggests that there was a tradition in general circulation to the effect that King Harald was a tight-fisted and authoritarian ruler, as indeed later sources attest. It also suggests that elsewhere in his exposition the author went out of his way to downplay this tradition and convey the overall impression that Harald should be located in a series of peaceable and benevolent kings.

Olav's son Magnus Bareleg (Magnús berfættr) reverts to the vigour and adventurousness of his grandfather Harald, as the text explicitly states.²⁸ But despite tensions with his brother Sveinn and the chieftain Steigar-Þórir, his warrior qualities are cast in a positive light. We learn that his campaigns are directed against outlaws and vikings and are not a matter of domestic dissensions. Even his conflict with the Swedish king Ingi is toned down and ends in a reconciliation sealed by his marriage to Ingi's daughter. The dramatic episode in *Morkinskinna* in which Magnus's delegate Sigurðr ullstrengir is discountenanced by the rebellious chieftain Sveinki Steinarsson is not alluded to.²⁹ Nor is his final raid in Ireland portrayed as foolhardy.

²⁷ *Ágrip*, p. 60.

²⁸ *Ágrip*, p. 66.

²⁹ See *Morkinskinna*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 53 (Copenhagen: Jørgensen, 1932), pp. 307–10; and *Morkinskinna: The Earliest Icelandic Chronicle of the Norwegian Kings (1030–1157)*, trans. by Theodore M. Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade, Islandica, 51 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 292–94.

After his death in Ireland Magnus is succeeded by his three sons Eystein, Sigurd, and Olav. Once more, in contrast to later sources, the author has not an ill word to say about any of them: '[They were] all good men, distinguished, quiet, amenable, and peaceable, and there are many good and outstanding things to say about them.'³⁰ Olav dies young, and Sigurd, despite the allegation that he is 'quiet and peaceable', departs on a famous voyage to Jerusalem. In other sources it is not presented at all under the guise of a pilgrimage but rather as a distinctly aggressive raiding expedition with a long succession of pitched battles culminating in a grandiose reception at Constantinople.³¹ In the course of these adventures Sigurd acquires a great quantity of gold and treasure, but in *Ágrip* the emphasis is on his acquisition of a piece of the True Cross. What goes altogether unmentioned is his tense relationship with his brother Eystein and his fits of insanity late in life. The latter are referred to only in euphemistic terms: 'In his days there was prosperity both with respect to harvests and manifold other benefits, with the one exception that he could not control himself when he was beset by discomfort in his later years.'³² Here 'discomfort' renders the word *óhægynði*, which conveys no idea of the mental instability attributed to Sigurd elsewhere.

Ágrip reports the arrival of Harald (Haraldr gilli), who claims to be the son of Magnus Bareleg, but four missing leaves result in the omission of the story of his rivalry with Sigurd Jerusalemfarer's son Magnus. The story can be followed again only when Harald's sons Ingi, Sigurd, and Eystein succeed to the throne. At this point the depiction of character takes an abrupt turn. Rather than being sanitized like their predecessors, these three heirs to the throne are described just as we find them in later accounts, Sigurd and Eystein in negative terms and Ingi in positive terms. Sigurd has a shifting disposition and is 'difficult and unruly'. And a little later: 'King Sigurd was an aggressive man in every way and a troublemaker even as he was growing up.' Eystein fares no better and is described as 'outspoken, crafty, deceitful, grasping, and acquisitive'. By contrast Ingi is 'well liked and popular with his men'.³³ We must return to this new tone in a moment, but for the time being the extant text ends with the killing of a certain Geirsteinn, who has pressed unwanted attentions on a woman named Gyða.

³⁰ *Ágrip*, p. 70.

³¹ *Morkinskinna*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 337–52; *Morkinskinna*, trans. by Andersson and Gade, pp. 313–25.

³² *Ágrip*, p. 74.

³³ *Ágrip*, p. 78.

Preliminary Conclusions

The tripartite chronology adopted here appears to correspond to an understanding of the stages in early Norwegian history. As already noted, the earliest history is characterized by autocracy, gynecocracy, sorcery, apostasy, and political assassination. Not a single king in the period up to 995 emerges in a completely positive light. But the moral darkness is swept aside with the advent of the Olavs, who are portrayed not only as personally attractive but more importantly as the patrons of Christianity. There seems to be a clear effort to distinguish the heathen and Christian eras in moral terms. The Christian impetus continues under Magnus the Good, but Christian auspices are less overt under later kings, with the possible exception of Sigurd Jerusalemfarer. Nonetheless the more positive characterizations and the clarified atmosphere stand in notable contrast to the dark days of paganism. The message seems to be that Christianity ushered in a new and radically improved historical era.

The exception to this trend is the critical characterization of the latest recorded kings Sigurd and Eystein. We may wonder why such a clear and steady line of improvement is interrupted in this way. The answer may be that Ingi's popularity was still in living memory some thirty years after his death when *Ágrip* was written. That popularity would have subtracted from the reputation of his antagonistic brothers. In the 1190s a certain realism about the recent past may have displaced the perceived perfectibility of the Christian era.

As we saw at the outset of this paper, there has been no lack of surmises about the sources of *Ágrip*. They have clustered around the relationship of *Ágrip* to *HN* and Theodoricus's *Historia de antiquitate*, but it has been argued further that both *Ágrip* and *HN* could have made use of the lost kings' lives by Sæmundr Sigfússon and Ari Þorgilsson. Finally, Gudrun Lange has suggested that the author of *Ágrip* may also have used the Latin version of Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* and the *Oldest Saga of St Olav. These investigations have been conducted on the basis of textual echoes, but we may also inquire whether the diptych structure discriminating a pre-Christian and a Christian age has any precedent in earlier writings.

The individual lives of the two Olavs, even in the perhaps unlikely event that they antedate *Ágrip*, do not locate their protagonists in a longer evolution from heathen gloom to Christian light and could therefore not have served as models. We can say almost nothing about the kings' lives of Sæmundr Sigfússon, and a reading of Ari's extant *Íslendingabók* does not suggest that his minimalist narrative would have allowed for an ambitious historical framework. The text most often

proposed as a source for *Ágrip* is Theodoricus's *Historia de antiquitate*,³⁴ but Theodoricus is not much preoccupied with the history of good and evil. The very short chapter on Harald Fairhair notes chronological difficulties and laments the lack of written sources but has nothing to say one way or the other about Harald himself. Erik Bloodaxe receives even more cursory treatment. His nickname is explained on the basis of fratricide, and both he and his wife Gunnhild are described as cruel, but no supporting evidence is adduced and no point is made of their cruelty. In opposition to the accusation of apostasy levelled against Hakon the Good in other sources, Theodoricus describes Hakon only in positive terms. On the other hand, Hakon's successor Harald Greycloak, along with Gunnhild, is cast in a very negative light. That treatment extends to Jarl Hakon as well, although Gunnhild bears much of the brunt of his deceitfulness, with the result that his outmanoeuvring of Gunnhild is hardly counted against him. No mention is made of his womanizing, which in *Ágrip* and later texts seems to be the chief source of indignation against him. It is therefore fair to say that no uniformly sceptical picture of the early kings emerges to contrast with the Christian enlightenment of the Olavs. The author's disapprobation seems in fact to be quite single-mindedly focused on Gunnhild rather than on a generation of kings.³⁵

The post-Olavian era described by Theodoricus is rather shorter than what we find in *Ágrip*, extending only as far as Sigurd Jerusalemfarer. Magnus the Good is portrayed as a peaceable man, although he fights campaigns against the heathens and the Danes, the latter campaign involving an intra-Scandinavian conflict on which Theodoricus would rather not dwell. Magnus's division of the realm with Harald Hardrada is depicted in terms that redound very much to his credit, but when it comes to a characterization of Harald, the good and bad qualities are equally balanced. His son Olav the Quiet, on the other hand, enjoys the most unblemished approval allotted to any Norwegian king. His son Magnus Bareleg, in turn, is judged to be unlike his father and more akin to his grandfather Harald Hardrada. He becomes an inveterate raider and dies, not inappropriately, in the course of such a raid. His two longest surviving sons, Eystein and Sigurd, are glowingly described, although a somewhat less discreet reference to Sigurd's fits of madness than we find in *Ágrip* finally lowers him to a middle status. It should therefore be evident that Theodoricus's early period is not comparable to the highly problematic counterpart in *Ágrip* and that the later period is significantly

³⁴ On Theodoricus, cf. the preceding chapter by Sverre Bagge.

³⁵ See Theodoricus, *Historia*, pp. 10–13.

more mixed. There is no structured contrast between a pre-Christian and a Christian era.

On the contrary, Theodoricus concludes his epitome with the death of Sigurd Jerusalemfarer looking ahead to a period of greater rather than less depravity:

Nos quoque hujus schedulae hic finem facimus, indignum valde judicantes memoriae posterorum tradere scelera, homicidia, perjuria, parricidia, sanctorum locorum contaminationes, Dei contemptum, non minus religiosorum depræditiones quam totius plebis, mulierum captivationes et ceteras abominationes, quas longum est enumerare.³⁶

[We too will put an end to this epitome, judging it to be very unworthy to transmit to posterity the crimes, murders, perjuries, parricides, desecration of holy places, the contempt for God, the depredations against the clergy no less than the whole people, the seizing of women and other abominations, which would be long to enumerate.]

Far from seeing the evolution of history as a story of moral progress, Theodoricus clearly views it as a trajectory of decline, a perspective opposed to what we find in *Ágrip*.

Less clear cut is the situation in *HN*.³⁷ Although the author announces in the preface that he will lay out both 'the arrival of Christianity and at the same time the flight of paganism', it is difficult to discover an overarching historical thesis.³⁸ The narrative reaches only a short way into St Olav's career and therefore signals nothing about moral progress in the later kings. To be sure, Gunnhild is a baleful presence,³⁹ but not altogether so persistently as in *Ágrip*. The enchantment of Harald Fairhair and his capitulation to sorcery are not to be found in *HN*. Hakon the Good is the same apostate we encounter in *Ágrip*,⁴⁰ and Jarl Hakon is consummately evil although, as in Theodoricus, his womanizing is not mentioned.⁴¹ Altogether the failings of the early kings are less insistently recorded in *HN*. It is therefore difficult to make a strong case for believing that *Ágrip* inherited its historical concept from *HN* or a related source, although the fragmentary state of the manuscript excludes any certainty. As the texts stand, however, the tacit idea that the advent of Christianity led to both moral and material improvement seems more likely to be original with the author of *Ágrip*.

³⁶ Theodoricus, *Historia*, p. 67.

³⁷ On this text, cf. the chapter by Lars Boje Mortensen in this volume.

³⁸ See *Historia Norwegie*, p. 50.

³⁹ *Historia Norwegie*, p. 82.

⁴⁰ *Historia Norwegie*, pp. 82–84.

⁴¹ *Historia Norwegie*, pp. 88–90.

Since the differentiation of ages in *Ágrip* cannot be traced to the other synoptic histories, we should perhaps widen our focus beyond Norway and Iceland in the hope of finding some other source for a history conceived of as a succession of two ages before and after the conversion to Christianity. The idea is latent in Augustine's *City of God* and is elaborated more pointedly in Orosius's *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, both widely read in the Middle Ages.⁴² Lars Boje Mortensen, in his Introduction to the recent collaborative edition of *HN*, notes the possibility that the author of that text may have known Orosius: 'Also the placing and the scope of the geographical introduction may have been inspired by other texts than Adam alone. A strong candidate is Orosius's popular *Historiae adversus paganos* (finished 417) which opens with a large geographical canvas of the Roman Mediterranean world.'⁴³ That remark was indeed the original inspiration of the present essay.

We have seen that what remains of *HN* does not show traces of the differentiation of ages that we find in *Ágrip*, but it is precisely this differentiation that Orosius emphasizes in the last paragraph of his book:

Explicui adiuuante Christo secundum praeceptum tuum, beatissime pater Augustine, ab initio mundi usque in praesentem diem, hoc est per annos quinque milia sescentos decem et octo, cupiditates et punctiones hominum peccatorum, conflictationes saeculi et iudicia Dei quam breuissime et quam simplicissime potui, Christianis tamen temporibus propter praesentem magis Christi gratiam ab illa incredulitatis confusione discretis.⁴⁴

[With the help of Christ and according to your instruction, most blessed Father Augustine, I have laid out the passions and punishments of sinful men, the struggles of this world and the judgements of God from the beginning of the world down to the present day, that is over a period of 5618 years, as briefly and as simply as I could, separating, however, Christian times from the confusion of unbelief because of the more prevalent grace of Christ.]

This is not the place to unfold once again Orosius's optimistic trajectory of progress from a dismal pagan past to a hopeful Christian present, even if I were competent to do so. It must suffice to make reference to the standard works.

⁴² On the knowledge of Orosius in the Middle Ages, see Benoît Lacroix, *Orose et ses idées* (Montréal: Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1965; Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1965), pp. 16–20; and Hans-Werner Goetz, *Die Geschichtstheologie des Orosius*, Impulse der Forschung, 32 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), pp. 148–65.

⁴³ *Historia Norwegie*, p. 28.

⁴⁴ Paulus Orosius, *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII. Accedit eiusdem liber apologeticus*, ed. by Karl Zangemeister, Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum, 5 (Vienna: Gerold, 1882), pp. 563–64.

Lacroix provides a brief summation and Goetz emphasizes the evolution towards *felicitas* as well as noting the transition from paganism to an improved Christian age at many points in his book.⁴⁵

The argument advanced here is not that the author of *Ágrip* knew or directly used Orosius, only that the idea of successive ages and Christian clarification was easily available and could have suggested how the succession of Norwegian kings might be organized.⁴⁶ The author of *Ágrip* seems virtually certain to have had an ecclesiastical affiliation. We may also bear in mind that he seems to have worked during the period in which the two Olavs and their conversion activity first became the subject of historical writing, most notably in Oddr Snorrason's account of Olav Tryggvason. This literary venture would have pinpointed the transition from a pagan to a Christian age and would have enhanced a consciousness of how history changed at precisely the time of the conversion. Whatever the details may have been, the distinction between a wicked heathen age and a superior Christian age, which seems peculiar to *Ágrip*, must lie somewhere in the continuum from Augustine to Orosius and down to the twelfth century.

⁴⁵ Lacroix, *Orose et ses idées*, pp. 163–67; and Goetz, *Die Geschichtstheologie*, pp. 30, 56, 71–107, 117, 120, 122, 125, and 141. See also Eugenio Corsini, *Introduzione alle 'Storie' di Orosio* (Torino: Giappichelli, 1968), pp. 111–34.

⁴⁶ Paul Lehmann, 'Skandinaviens Anteil an der lateinischen Literatur und Wissenschaft des Mittelalters', in *Erforschung des Mittelalters: Ausgewählte Abhandlungen und Aufsätze*, 5 vols (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1962), v, 275–429 (p. 341) (first published in *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, phil.-hist. Abteilung, 1936) indicates that Orosius was known in Iceland but refrains from giving references 'zumal eine sehr umständliche Quellenuntersuchung nötig wäre, die allerdings einmal gemacht werden muss'.

ÍSLENDINGABÓK: THE CREATION OF AN ICELANDIC CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

Else Mundal

The subject for discussion in this chapter is the brief Icelandic text *Íslendingabók*, a piece of literature of great interest, since it is the first known text written in Iceland in the vernacular.¹ In this brief history of the Icelanders, the Christianization of Iceland and its Christian culture are the main themes, and the way its author renders his story suggests that he considered it important to present the Icelanders as choosing of their own free will to become a Christian people. In the resulting narrative, Icelandic ‘national’ and Christian identities are blended and linked to local bishops.

Not much is known about the life of its author, the priest Ari fróði (1067/68–1148), who wrote *Íslendingabók* between 1122 and 1133.² His father Þorgils was drowned while still a young man,³ and Ari was brought up by his grandfather Gellir. Gellir died when Ari was seven years old, and he was sent to Hallr

¹ *Íslendingabók* has been published many times, first by Bishop Þórður Þórláksson in Skálholt in 1688. The edition quoted in this chapter is *Íslendingabók*, pp. 3–28. English translation in *Íslendingabók, Kristni Saga: The Book of the Icelanders: The Story of the Conversion*, trans. by Siân Grønlie, Viking Society for Northern Research, Text Series (London: University College London, 2006), pp. 9–14.

² Ari says that he showed *Íslendingabók* to the bishops Þórlákr and Ketill and to the priest Sæmundr. Ketill became bishop of Hólar in 1122, and Bishop Þórlákr and Sæmundr fróði both died in 1133. At least the draft, which was shown to the bishops and Sæmundr, must have been finished in 1133 or before. It cannot be ruled out that the final version was completed after 1133, but most likely the book was written in the middle of the 1120s.

³ The death of Þorgils Gellisson is mentioned at the end of *Laxdæla saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Íslenzk fornrit*, 5 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1934), p. 229.

Pórarinnsson in Haukadálr, where he stayed until he was twenty-one.⁴ Hallr had established a school on his farm, which became an important centre of learning in Iceland. Teitr Ísleifsson — a son of the first bishop in Iceland, Ísleifr Gizurarson, and the brother of the second bishop, Gizurr Ísleifsson — was also fostered by Hallr, and from his childhood on Ari established close contact with the family to which the first two Icelandic bishops belonged. Teitr was a few years older than Ari and became his tutor — Ari calls him *fóstri* (fosterer).

Ari was educated as a priest in Haukadálr. What happened to Ari after he left Haukadálr is very unclear. It cannot be ruled out that he also studied or travelled abroad, but no sources confirm this.⁵ He most likely worked as a priest in the Snæfellsnes area at the Staðr (now Staðarstaður) farm, where his descendants later lived. His byname, *fróði*, indicates that he was looked upon as a wise man and as an authority, especially on history and knowledge of the past.

Íslendingabók is the only certain surviving piece of Ari's works, but in its prologue Ari himself mentions 'ættartala' (genealogies) and 'konunga ævi' (lives of kings).⁶ It is also commonly believed that Ari had something to do with the first *Landnámabók*, which is only preserved in later versions; *ættartala* could in fact be identical with the first version of *Landnámabók*. Ari's work regarding kings in all likelihood consisted of short and concise entries containing the length of a king's reign and its important events. A few other works have been attributed to Ari, among them a list of Icelandic priests, dated to 1143.⁷ Another work is the so-called *Ævi Snorra góða* (*The Life of Snorri Goði*).⁸

⁴ This information is given by Ari himself in chap. 9 of *Íslendingabók*.

⁵ Aksel E. Christensen has argued that Ari had probably visited Lund. See his article 'Om kronologien i Ari's *Íslendingabók* og dens laan fra Adam af Bremen', in *Nordiske studier: Festskrift til Chr. Westergaard-Nielsen på 65-årsdagen den 24. november 1975*, ed. by Johannes Brøndum-Nielsen and others (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1975), pp. 23–34.

⁶ Most scholars have argued that *ættartala* and *konunga ævi* are two parts of the *Íslendingabók* which Ari showed to the bishops and Sæmundr fróði, and that these parts were omitted in the final version of the book. Another theory, which goes as far back as to Árni Magnússon, the great collector of Old Norse manuscripts, is that *ættartala* and *konunga ævi* are separate works, which Ari wrote in addition to *Íslendingabók*. Arguments in favour of this theory are found in Else Mundal, 'Íslendingabók, ættar tala og konunga ævi', in *Festskrift til Ludvig Holm-Olsen på hans 70-årsdag den 9. juni 1984*, ed. by Bjarne Fidjestøl and others (Øvre Ervik: Alvheim & Eide, 1984), pp. 255–71.

⁷ Printed in *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, vol. 1 (Kaupmannahöfn: Bókmentafélag, 1857), pp. 180–94.

⁸ Preserved in one of the manuscripts of *Eyrbyggja saga* and printed as an appendix to *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, *Íslensk fornrit*, 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935), pp. 185–86.

Ari opens the prologue of *Íslendingabók* by saying ‘*Íslendingabók gørða ek fyrst byskupum órum, Þorláki og Katli, ok sýndak bæði þeim ok Sæmundi presti*’ (‘I first wrote the Book of Icelanders for our bishops Þorlákr and Ketill, and I showed it both to them and to the priest Sæmundr’).⁹ The wording probably indicates that Ari had been charged with the task of writing the book by the Icelandic bishops. The third person to whom he showed the book, Sæmundr fróði, was an older contemporary of Ari, who according to *Íslendingabók* (chap. 9) had stayed in France. According to later sources (*Oddverja Annall*), Sæmundr studied in Paris.¹⁰ He is known to have written a work about Norwegian kings, which must have been written in Latin, since Snorri in the prologues of *Heimskringla* and *The Separate Saga of St Óláfr* states that Ari was the first one to write ‘fræði’ (history) in the vernacular. Sæmundr is probably mentioned together with the bishops because he was considered a great authority by his contemporaries. It is worth noticing that all the men who had something to do with the creation of *Íslendingabók* belonged to the clergy and were leading men in the Icelandic church at the time. In short, the text was written by a priest, it may have been commissioned by the bishops, and the bishops and another important Icelandic cleric gave the author their advice.

Íslendingabók exists only in two manuscripts from the seventeenth century, both made by the priest Jón Erlendsson (AM 113 a and b).¹¹ At the end of AM 113 b, Jón writes that the copy was made in the year 1651 on the Monday after *Dominicam Jubilate* (21 April). Both a and b are copies made from a very old manuscript of around 1200, or even a few years earlier. AM 113 b is thought to have been copied first, while AM 113 a seems to be a more accurate copy and contains older forms than the other manuscript. How close the manuscript from around 1200 was to Ari’s original work is impossible to say, since we only have copies of *one* old manuscript — but it is commonly believed that the two later copies give a good picture of Ari’s original work.

The title *Íslendingabók* is mentioned by the author in the prologue and must be original. The title indicates that Ari meant to write a book about the Icelanders, and *Íslendingabók* has normally been described as a short history of Iceland, which of course is correct. It is, however, apparent that the climax of Ari’s short history

⁹ *Íslendingabók*, p. 3; *Íslendingabók*, trans. by Grønlie, p. 3.

¹⁰ *Oddverja Annall* is printed in *Íslandske Annaler indtil 1578*, ed. by Gustav Storm (Christiania: Grøndahl & Søns Bogtrykkeri, 1888), pp. 427–91. The entry on Sæmundr fróði is found under the year 1077 (p. 471).

¹¹ These manuscripts are now in the collection of manuscripts of the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar (the Árni Magnússon Institute) in Reykjavík.

about the Icelanders is the story of the conversion of Iceland in the year 1000, when Christianity was approved by the Icelandic parliament, the *Alþing*. Furthermore, the last part of the book is in fact written as an episcopal chronicle narrating the stories of the Icelandic bishops, with the main focus on the bishopric of Skálholt.¹² When writing his history about Iceland and Icelanders, the author of *Íslendingabók* chose the history of Christianity in Iceland and the history of the two Icelandic bishoprics as the backbone of the narrative. The bishoprics are seen as the most important institutions in the country to which the history of Iceland is connected. This feature of the narrative directly relates to the question of whether Ari's little book should be seen as a conscious construction of an Icelandic Christian identity.

Old Norse authors are known for their 'objective style', meaning that they avoid subjective, appraising judgements in their writings, and thus we find very few condemnations of the pagan past in Old Norse texts. In this respect, Ari seems to share a style of writing with the authors of the later saga genres. Ari's Christian identity comes into view through his positive appraisal of Christianity, not through a negative attitude of heathendom. The pagan past of his people and his family is not mentioned as a problem; in fact, Ari avoids bringing the paganism of the past into focus.

Ari names himself, not in the *Íslendingabók* proper, but in a chapter following *Íslendingabók* in both AM 113 a and b, where the ancestors of the bishops are listed, as are the common forefathers of the royal Ynglinga family and Ari's own family. Here Ari traces his own family back to *Yngvi Tyrkjakonungr* (Yngvi, king of the Turks), *Njǫrðr Sviakonungr* (Njǫrðr, king of the Swedes), and *Freyr*. These three names at the end of the genealogy of Ari's own family can be identified as Old Norse gods, something of which Ari was of course conscious. But in this context they are presented as humans, in accordance with the euhemeristic way of thinking, and Ari can claim to be of the same noble descent as the members of the royal houses in Scandinavia — who were known to have descended from gods — and at the same time make the pagan origin of his family unproblematic. The fact that Ari neither condemns Old Norse heathendom nor stresses the merits of his own Christian faith openly does not mean that he lacks a strong Christian identity, but rather that he expresses his own Christian identity and that of his people in his own, calm, Old Norse way.

¹² See Else Mundal, 'Íslendingabók vurdert som bispestolskrønike', *Alvíssmál*, 3 (1994), 63–72.

Ari opens Chapter 1 by mentioning the settlement of Iceland in the time of King Harald Fairhair. This paramount event in Icelandic history from pagan times is dated with reference to the death of an English saint and Christian chronology (years after the birth of Christ); from the very beginning of the book, Old Norse history runs parallel to Christian history, until they converge in the year 1000 with the formal conversion of Iceland. This event is a turning point in history, and even things which happened earlier — for instance, the settlement of Greenland in Chapter 6 and the baptism of Hallr á Síðu in Chapter 9 — are related to this chronological point. It is also worth noticing that Ari mentions in Chapter 1 that Irish monks lived in Iceland before immigrants from Norway settled there. He says that the settlers found books, bells, and crosiers — holy objects that told them that the people who had found Iceland before them were Christians. As I have argued previously, one reason why Ari mentions this small detail may be that these sacred objects, as he sees it, sanctify the land. It was only a matter of time before the return of Christianity.¹³

In the first chapters of *Íslendingabók*, the author provides an account of the development of the Icelandic institutions and the legal system. In the second chapter, four settlers — one from every quarter of Iceland — are mentioned, and the division of the land into *sjerðingar* (quarters) is thereby anticipated. The same chapter mentions that the first Icelandic law, *Ulfjótsslog*, was introduced by a certain Ulfjótr, who had modelled his law on the law of western Norway, the law of Gulathing. The third chapter is devoted to the establishment of the Icelandic parliament, the *Alþing*, which was a major event in the development of the Icelandic community. In the fourth chapter, we are told how the Icelanders worked out how long a year ought to be; and in the fifth chapter, we hear of the division of the country into quarters, with every quarter subdivided into things. We are informed that Ulfjótr, the same man who brought the first law to Iceland, was the first *logsögumaðr* (lawspeaker, the man who recited the law at the *Alþing*); and an internal Icelandic chronology is established by counting the number of years each lawspeaker occupied the office.

Chapters 2–5 thus describe the development of a society from the starting point of groups of unorganized settlers to its final stage — a society with all ‘necessary’ institutions in place. It is worth noticing that this development took place,

¹³ See Mundal, ‘*Íslendingabók* vurdert som bispestolskrønike’, p. 71; see also Pernille Hermann, ‘*Íslendingabók* and History’, in *Reflections on Old Norse Myths*, ed. by Pernille Hermann and others, *Studies in Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 17–32, see especially p. 25.

and was completed, in heathen times. What function do these chapters fulfil within the narrative of *Íslendingabók*, which reaches its climax in the description of the conversion of Iceland in Chapter 7 and ends as a chronicle of bishops? One possible answer could be that Ari was as interested in the institutions established in pagan times as he was in the history of the Icelandic church. Yet if we take a closer look at the text, it becomes obvious that only the last chapters of *Íslendingabók* — from the chapter telling about the conversion onwards — present a coherent history. The preceding chapters are much more incongruent: there is no causal connection between them, and the chronology in this part of *Íslendingabók* is unclear, although it is indicated by the mentioning of lawspeakers in office. It seems that the chapters at the beginning of *Íslendingabók* are more related to the last part of the book than to each other, namely by their describing institutions and issues that were as important for the Christian as they were for the pre-Christian society.

Ari's main reason for writing about law, the thing, the length of the year, and the division of the country into quarters may have been that he wanted to underline that Christian society in Iceland was built upon the institutions of heathen society. It was necessary to say something about the law, the thing, and the lawspeakers because in Iceland Christianity was accepted unanimously at the *Alþing*, thanks to the wise behaviour of a lawspeaker who, in fact, was still a pagan at the time. Christianity was approved as law, and the old law had to be changed. The bishops, too, used the *Alþing* as their forum, both when they wanted to have new laws passed and when they wanted to have a new bishop elected, as demonstrated in Chapter 10.

The motivation for saying something about the division of the country into quarters may have been that the borders of the Icelandic bishoprics followed the borders of the already existing quarters. When Iceland was divided into two bishoprics, the eastern, southern, and western quarters constituted one bishopric (of Skálholt), and the northern quarter the other (of Hólar).

Ari may have written the chapter about how the Icelanders stipulated the length of the year because this was an important issue in Christian culture; but his main intention was probably to show that the Icelanders in pagan times had managed to work out a way to reckon the length of the year that was different from the Christian calendar, but in fact gave the same result. Similarities rather than differences between the two cultures are thereby emphasized.

By showing that the Christian church in Iceland was built upon institutions from pagan times and that Christianity was accepted in Iceland by following old Icelandic laws and procedures, Ari managed to incorporate the heathen past into

his narrative in such a way as to demonstrate, on the one hand, that the change of religion was a break in historical development and, on the other, that there was a strong continuity between the pagan and Christian society. Conversion is depicted as a turning point in history, both by making the conversion of Iceland the climax of the story and by mentioning the baptism of individuals.¹⁴ But he does not describe the time before conversion and thereafter as qualitatively different. The pagan past is not depicted as evil: on the contrary, it formed a good basis for a Christian society.

The conversion of Iceland, as described by Ari in the fascinating story in Chapter 7 of *Íslendingabók*, is special because it happened in a different manner from that of similar processes in other countries. The story describes how the pagans and the Christians 'sögðusk hvárir ýr lögum við aðra' ('each side [...] declared itself under separate laws'),¹⁵ and a fight nearly broke out between the two parties at the *Alþing*. After having deliberated the problem under his fur bedcover for one day and one night, the lawspeaker — who was still a pagan at the time — suggested a compromise: all Icelanders should be Christians, but some heathen practices should still be allowed. Ari adds that these pagan practices — such as the exposure of children, the eating of horse meat, and sacrifices in secret — were prohibited

¹⁴ In the genealogies of the bishops following the *Íslendingabók* proper, there are Greek crosses over the names of Hallr á Síðu, Þórðr hesthǫfði, and Guðmundr Eyjólfsson. As suggested by Jón Jóhannesson in his introduction to *Íslendingabók Ara Froda: AM 113 a and 113 b* (Reykjavík: Háskóli Íslands, 1956), pp. xvii–xviii, 'The crosses can hardly mean anything else but that these men were the first of their line to embrace Christianity'. In both copies of *Íslendingabók* crosses are placed over these three names. There must also have been a cross over the name of Gizurr inn hvíti, but this cross is missing in both manuscripts. This means that the cross over Gizurr's name most likely was missing in the manuscript from around 1200 that Jón Erlendsson copied, since it is not likely that he would make the same mistake twice. The crosses over the three names could have been added by someone who forgot to draw the fourth cross any time between 1200 and 1651, but if the crosses existed in the medieval manuscript from the very beginning, and their meaning was to point out the first men who converted to Christianity in every genealogical line, there was a fault already in the manuscript from around 1200, and the drawing of the four crosses, which must have been original, can be pushed even further back in time. It cannot be ruled out that Ari himself placed the Greek crosses over the names of the men who converted to Christianity. That would have been in accordance with the importance he attached to Christianization. This cannot, however, be proved, and it is perhaps more likely that the crosses tell us something about the reception of *Íslendingabók*. The person who put crosses over some names — if it was not the author himself — has signalled that the message of the book has been received: this is a book about Christianization and Christian identity.

¹⁵ *Íslendingabók*, p. 16; *Íslendingabók*, trans. by Grønlie, p. 8.

after a few years. The following story is one of the best known in Old Norse literature:

En síðan es menn kvómu í búðir, þá lagðisk hann niðr Þorgeirr ok breiddi feld sinn á sik ok hvíldi þann dag allan ok nóttina eptir ok kvað ekki orð. En of morguninn eptir settisk hann upp ok gærði orð, at menn skyldi ganga til lögbergis. En þá hóf hann tǫlu sína upp, es menn kvómu þar, ok sagði, at hónum þótti þá komit hag manna í ónýtt efni, ef menn skyldi eigi hafa allir lög ein á landi hér, ok talði fyrir mǫnnum á marga vega, at þat skyldi eigi láta verða, ok sagði, at þat mundi at því ósætti verða, es vísa ván vas, at þær barsmíðir gærðisk á miðli manna, es landit eyddisk af. [...] ‘En nú þykkir mér þat ráð,’ kvað hann, ‘at vér látim ok eigi þá ráða, es mest vilja í gegn gangask, ok miðlum svá mál á miðli þeira, at hvárirtveggju hafi nakkvat síns máls, ok hǫfum allir ein lög ok einn sið. Þat mon verða satt, es vér slitum í sundr lǫgin, at vér monum slíta ok friðinn.’ En hann lauk svá máli sínu, at hvárirtveggju játtu því, at allir skyldi ein lög hafa, þau sem hann réði upp at segja. Þá vas þat mælt í lögum, at allir menn skyldi kristnir vesa ok skírn taka, þeir es áðr váru óskírðir á landi hér; en of barnaútburðr skyldu standa en fornu lög ok of hrossakǫtsát. Skyldu menn blóta á laun, ef vildu, en varða fjǫrbaugsgarðr, ef váttum of kvæmi við. En síðarr fám vetrum vas sú heiðni af numin sem ǫnnur.

[And later, when everyone had returned to their booths, Þorgeirr lay down and spread his cloak over himself, and rested all that day and the following night, and did not speak a word. And the next morning, he got up and sent word that people should go to the Law-Rock. And once people had arrived there, he began his speech, and said that he thought people's affairs had come to a bad pass, if they were not all to have the same law in this country, and tried to persuade them in many ways that they should not let this happen, and said it would give rise to such discord that it was certainly to be expected that fights would take place between people by which the land would be laid waste. [...] ‘And it now seems advisable to me,’ he says, ‘that we too do not let those who most wish to oppose each other prevail, and let us arbitrate between them, so that each side has its own way in something, and let us all have the same law and the same religion. It will prove true that if we tear apart the law, we will also tear apart the peace.’ And he brought his speech to a close in such a way that both sides agreed that everyone should have the same law, the one he decided to proclaim. It was then proclaimed in the laws that all people should be Christian, and that those in this country who had not yet been baptised should receive baptism; but the old laws should stand as regards the exposure of children and the eating of horse-flesh. People had the right to sacrifice in secret, if they wished, but it would be punishable by the lesser outlawry if witnesses were produced. And a few years later, these heathen provisions were abolished, like the others.]¹⁶

Ari's story about the conversion of Iceland later became the ‘canonical’ version, so to speak, and is retold in many texts. It is interesting that this story presents the events as if *the Icelanders Christianized themselves*. It is mentioned in the opening

¹⁶ *Íslendingabók*, pp. 16–17; *Íslendingabók*, trans. by Grønlie, p. 9.

of Chapter 7 that King Olav Tryggvason ‘kom kristni í Norveg ok á Íslandi’ (‘brought Christianity to Norway and Iceland’),¹⁷ and that the King’s missionary, Þangbrandr, was sent to Iceland. But the final step towards becoming a Christian people was taken by the Icelanders themselves.

This very special conversion story in all likelihood must have formed the basis for a Christian identity, which was an Icelandic identity at the same time, since the conversion process in Iceland was not shared with other peoples. The fact that a people, with about half of them pagan and led by a heathen lawspeaker, made the collective decision to become Christians made it very easy to incorporate the pagan past into the history of the country. The pagan past could in fact be incorporated with pride.

Ari fróði wrote at a time when he had few if any Icelandic models to build upon. For a Christian author the Bible would, of course, be an obvious model to follow, and Pernille Hermann has read *Íslendingabók* in the light of Christian typology and interpreted the two parts — the chapters before and after Christianization — as modelled after biblical texts.¹⁸ The problem with such an interpretation is that it is difficult to find elements in the text itself clearly indicating that the author wrote his narrative with biblical stories and typology in mind.

Ari may, however, have known of works written by foreign authors, which he could have used as models for his writing. Previously I have argued that Ari knew Adam of Bremen’s *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, and that this work served as a model for *Íslendingabók*.¹⁹ Ari’s brief history and Adam’s much longer text are two narratives that are so different from each other in style and extent that the parallels are not easy to see — especially in the extensive text of the *Gesta Hammaburgensis*. But upon closer look there are in fact some striking similarities.

Ari opens *Íslendingabók* by stating that Iceland was settled from Norway during the reign of King Harald Fairhair. This opening may seem to be obvious — nearly the only possible opening for a book about the Icelanders — but this is perhaps partly because we know of such an opening as being the standard in a great number of the sagas of Icelanders. However, at the time when Ari wrote *Íslendingabók*, there were no written sagas of Icelanders and no model in Icelandic literature for the opening chapter of *Íslendingabók*. Seen against this background, it becomes

¹⁷ *Íslendingabók*, p. 14; *Íslendingabók*, trans. by Grønlie, p. 7.

¹⁸ Hermann, ‘*Íslendingabók* and History’, pp. 17–32.

¹⁹ Mundal, ‘*Íslendingabók* vurdert som bispestolskrønike’. For more details on Adam of Bremen’s text, see Ildar Garipzanov’s chapter in this volume.

more interesting that, when Adam of Bremen starts the *Gesta Hammaburgensis* by writing about Saxony, one of his main themes is to establish where the Saxons had originated.²⁰

In connection with the Saxons' migration into Saxony, Adam also mentions that another people, the Swebes, lived there earlier and emigrated prior to the Saxons' arrival. It is perhaps not a very close parallel, but it may have given Ari the idea that he had to mention the fact that the Norwegians who settled in Iceland were not the first people in that land and that Irish monks had lived there before them.

In the following chapters (I. 8–11), Adam describes how the Saxons were converted to Christianity. He first states that this happened on the command of the Frankish king Pippin, then Adam mentions the missionaries, and finally he tells how the Saxons decided to convert to Christianity and were baptized. Thereafter, the proper episcopal chronicle starts. In Chapter 7 of *Íslendingabók*, we recognize the same steps. First Ari states that the Norwegian king Olav Tryggvason brought Christianity both to Norway and Iceland, then he mentions the missionary Þangbrandr, and finally he tells how the Icelanders agreed to convert to Christianity and were baptized. Thus, the material and the sequence of events that the two authors have chosen to include are strikingly similar.

In a document — admittedly false — that Adam quotes in his text (I. 12), it is stated that tithing was introduced, that the episcopal seat in Bremen was founded, and that landed property was allocated to it. In Chapter 10 of *Íslendingabók*, we are likewise told that Bishop Gizurr introduced tithing in Iceland, that he founded the episcopal seat in Skálholt, and that he endowed it with landed property. This is of course information about Bishop Gizurr that we should expect Ari to report. It is, however, striking that the *Gesta Hammaburgensis* records the same type of information and in the same order. Such parallels make it very likely that Adam's work served as a model for Ari. And Ari's choice of a *gesta episcoporum* as a model for *Íslendingabók*, the first history about the Icelanders, is particularly interesting seen in relation to the question of what kind of Christian identity he wanted to create and communicate to the Icelanders.

In most other countries of medieval Europe, the history of a people was constructed around their kings, but for good reasons the history of Iceland could not be written in this way. The Icelanders had founded a society without royal leadership, an exception in Europe at the time. Yet Ari did not *have* to write his

²⁰ Adam, *Gesta*, I. 3–4.

history about the Icelanders as a chronicle about bishops or a bishopric — that was his own choice. Ari may have got this idea from reading Adam of Bremen. In his *Gesta Hammaburgensis* (IV. 36), Adam praises the Icelanders to the skies and says that they look upon their bishop as a king. This idea was adopted in Iceland at some point and is clearly expressed in a later Icelandic work called *Hungrvaka* (The Appetizer).²¹ But even though this view is not expressed in clear words in *Íslendingabók*, there is no doubt that Ari describes a society in which the bishops played a leading role. For Ari, a priest himself, for those bishops who probably commissioned *Íslendingabók*, and for the priest Sæmundr, who together with the bishops gave Ari advice in regard to this narrative, a society where the bishop played the role of a king may have been the ideal Christian society.

There are reasons to believe that Ari consciously gave a more idealized picture of the Icelandic bishops' position in society than historical conditions seem to justify. It is known from later sources, for instance from *Hungrvaka*, that the first Icelandic bishop, Ísleifr, encountered many problems in his relations with the chieftains, who did not always accept his authority. These problems are not mentioned by Ari at all, with the result that the picture of an Icelandic Christian identity as closely connected to the bishops as leaders of the Icelanders is more visible in *Íslendingabók* than it was in reality. Ari is known to be a reliable author, but what he chose to tell and what he chose not to perhaps show his ideology more than his attitude to truth.

²¹ For more details on this text, see the following chapter in this volume by Jonas Wellendorf.

WHETTING THE APPETITE FOR A VERNACULAR LITERATURE: THE ICELANDIC *HUNGRVAKA*

Jonas Wellendorf

H*ungrvaka* (*The Appetizer*) is an anonymous chronicle in the vernacular of the first five bishops of Skálholt and is one of the pioneering works of Icelandic historiography. The date of composition is not known with certainty; many scholars believe it was written in the first decade of the thirteenth century,¹ but the text may have been written slightly earlier. The narrative covers the pontificates of the first five bishops of Skálholt, 120 years in total: namely, Ísleifr Gizurarson (1056–80), Gizurr Ísleifsson (1082–1118), Þorlákr Runólfsson (1118–33), Magnús Einarsson (1134–48), and Klóngr Þorsteinsson (1152–75). The preserved versions of the text all end with a section forming an introduction to the life of St Þorlákr Þórhallsson (1178–93), the sixth bishop of Skálholt.² It seems likely that this section linking the two texts resulted from a revision of the earlier original, but this is impossible to determine with any certainty, especially considering that chronicles of bishops were often revised and updated with new sections.³

¹ See *Biskupa sögur*, II, ed. by Ásdís Egilsdóttir, Íslenzk fornrit, 16 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2002), pp. xxiv–xxxi, for a presentation of various views on the dating. Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, *Páll Jónsson Skálholtsbiskup*, Ritsafn sagnfræðistofnunar, 33 (Reykjavík: Sagnfræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands, 1993), p. 10, suggests that Páll Jónsson, the seventh bishop of Skálholt (1195–1211), might have been the author. An English translation of *Hungrvaka* was published by Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, *Origines Islandica: A Collection of the More Important Sagas and Other Native Writings Relating to the Settlement and Early History of Iceland*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), pp. 425–58, and a Danish translation can be found in Agnete Loth, *To islandske bispekrøniker* (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1989), pp. 31–58.

² After Þorlákr's death miracles were reported, and five years later the Icelandic national assembly endorsed his veneration as a saint.

³ The most recent editor of both texts, Ásdís Egilsdóttir (*Biskupa sögur*, II, 42, n. 2), believes that the present arrangement — with *Hungrvaka* being followed immediately by the life of Þorlákr

Skálholt was the older and more important of the two Icelandic dioceses, and *Hungrvaka* is the only known historical narrative about the cathedral, besides the lives of individual bishops. It was used as a source in *Kristni saga* ('The Saga about [the introduction of] Christianity') written not long before 1250,⁴ but otherwise there appear to be few traces of the text before the seventeenth century, when the five surviving manuscripts with so-called individual textual value and one excerpt were written down.⁵ Jón Helgason, who edited the text in 1938, argued that these manuscripts all derived from a common ancestor kept at Skálholt or in its vicinity in 1601, and furthermore characterizes this lost archetype as a fairly recent manuscript from around 1500 at the earliest.⁶ In other words, *Hungrvaka* does not appear to have been a widely disseminated text; but the lack of early copies can also be explained by the fact that the library/archive of the cathedral at Skálholt was damaged several times by fires.⁷

During the pontificate of Gizurr the Icelandic diocese was split into two, since the northerners wanted an episcopal see of their own. St Jón Ögmundarsson became the first bishop (1106–21) in the newly established northern diocese of Hólar and was promoted to sainthood in 1200, two years after Þorlákr.⁸ This Icelandic habit of venerating bishops as their first saints was in contrast to mainland Scandinavia, where the first indigenous saints were kings and many of the later saints were somehow connected to ruling dynasties too.⁹ Since the Icelanders had no kings — at least not before Iceland was subjected to the Norwegian crown in 1262 — some other figures of authority had to represent the divine and connect the Icelanders with God. So in the absence of kings, Icelanders had recourse to

— is the original one, whereas others, such as Gabriel Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 204, argue that the two texts were linked at a later stage.

⁴ Between 1237 and 1250 according to Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, *Kristni saga, Biskupa sögur*, I, Íslenzk fornrit, 15.1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2003), pp. lv–clx (p. cliv).

⁵ A significant number of secondary manuscripts, derived from known manuscripts are preserved as well.

⁶ Jón Helgason, *Byskupa sögur*, Editiones Arnarnagæðar, 13.1 (Copenhagen: Det kgl. nordiske Oldskriftselskab, 1938), pp. 26–39 (pp. 36–39).

⁷ Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, 'Biskopsstóll í Skálholti', in *Saga biskupsstólanna: Skálholt 950 ára – 2006 – Hólar 900 ára*, ed. by Gunnar Kristjánsson (Hólar: Bókaútgáfan Hólar, 2006), pp. 21–243 (p. 27).

⁸ Later Bishop Guðmundr of Hólar was venerated as a saint as well.

⁹ The same was the case with the Orkney Islands, where Earl Magnús Erlendsson (d. 1116) began to be venerated as a saint not too long after his death.

their bishops. An awareness of this lack of kings (and royal saints) and the importance of the bishops is well attested in medieval literature, and indeed, *Hungrvaka* reports that when Bishop Gizurr returned from abroad after his consecration,

svá vildi hverr maðr sitja ok standa sem hann bauð, ungr ok gamall, sæll ok fátækr, konur ok karlar, ok var rétt at segja at hann var bæði konungr ok byskup yfir landinu meðan hann lifði.

[every man would sit or stand as he [Gizurr] bade, young or old, rich or poor, women or men, and it is true to say that he was both king and bishop over the land as long as he lived.]¹⁰

Gizurr was just a bishop, but he nevertheless had the status equivalent of a king. So Gizurr possessed the two chief powers of the time: the royal and ecclesiastical. That a certain person has all the qualities that would be required of a king of Iceland is a theme that occurs from time to time in later Old Norse literature,¹¹ but in *Hungrvaka* the bishop is not only deemed fit to be a king, but is also said to be both king and bishop. This note about Gizurr is particularly interesting, because Adam of Bremen in the 1070s makes a somewhat similar statement about the Icelanders in his *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*:

Episcopum suum habent pro rege; ad illius nutum respicit omnis populus; quicquid ex Deo, ex scripturis, ex consuetudine aliarum gentium ille constituit, hoc pro lege habent.¹²

[They hold their bishop as king. All the people respect his wishes. They hold as law whatever he ordains as coming from God, or from the Scriptures, or even from the worthy practices of other peoples.]¹³

The similarity between these two statements is evident,¹⁴ and the possibility that there is some sort of connection between Adam's work and *Hungrvaka* becomes

¹⁰ *Hungrvaka*, p. 16. The English translation is from Vigfusson and Powell, *Origines Islandicae*, p. 435.

¹¹ See Theodore M. Andersson, 'The King of Iceland', *Speculum*, 74 (1999), 923–34.

¹² Adam, *Gesta*, IV. 36, p. 273.

¹³ Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. by Francis J. Tschan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 217–18.

¹⁴ In *Topographia Hibernica* (1188) Gerald of Wales makes a similar remark about the Icelanders: 'Gens hæc eodem utitur rege quo sacerdote; eodem principe quo pontifice. Penes enim episcopum tam regni quam sacerdotii jura consistunt'. *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, ed. by D. S. Brewer, *Rerum Britannicarum medii ævi scriptores*, 21 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1867), p. 96. 'This people [the Icelanders] considers the same person king as well as priest, the same princeps as well as pontifex. The royal and the sacerdotal powers are in the hands of the bishop.'

even more likely when one takes another, even more striking, parallel into consideration. Adam writes of a certain John who had been ordained as bishop in Ireland and then sent to the Orkneys (III. 70). Later, this John the Irishman (*Scotus*), at that time the Bishop of Mecklenburg, was captured and killed by pagan Slavs:

truncatis manibus ac pedibus, in platea corpus eius proiectum est, caput vero eius desectum, quod pagani conto pefigentes in titulum victoriae deo suo Redigost immolarunt.¹⁵

[his hands and feet were lopped off and his body was thrown upon the road. Cutting off his head, the barbarians fixed it on a spear and offered it to their god Redigast in token of their victory.]¹⁶

In a similar manner, *Hungrvaka* mentions a certain Jón írski ('John the Irishman/Scot') among the first foreign missionary bishops in Iceland:

Jón byskup inn írski, ok hafa þat sumir menn fyrir satt at hann færi síðan til Vinðlands ok sneri þar mǫrgum mǫnnum til Guðs, ok var síðan tekinn ok barðr ok hǫggnað af bæði hendr ok fœtr en hǫfuð síðast ok fór með þeim þíningum til Guðs.¹⁷

[Bishop John the Irishman; and some men hold for true that he afterwards went to Wendland and that there he turned many to God, and at last he was taken and flogged, and both his hands and feet cut off, and last of all his head, and in such torment he departed to God.]¹⁸

These two parallels between *Hungrvaka* and Adam's history have already been noticed,¹⁹ but I will emphasize that the author of *Hungrvaka* in all likelihood not only knew Adam's narrative, but that he also to some degree used Adam's work as a literary model. Considering the fact that Iceland originally belonged to the archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen, it is not unlikely that a copy of or some excerpts from Adam's work had made their way to Iceland already before 1200, and Old Norse excerpts from Adam's history have in fact been preserved in two Icelandic manuscripts, the oldest of which is dated to c. 1310.²⁰ Furthermore, the fabulous *Yngvars*

¹⁵ Adam, *Gesta*, p. 194.

¹⁶ Adam, *History of the Archbishops*, trans. by Tschan, p. 157.

¹⁷ *Hungrvaka*, p. 11.

¹⁸ Vigfusson and Powell, *Origines Islandicae*, p. 431.

¹⁹ See for example Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature*, p. 204.

²⁰ The Old Norse translation/excerpt covers Chapters 3–41 of the second book, and even though it is much abbreviated it is without doubt based on Adam's work. The excerpts begin as follows: 'Svá segir í Hamborgar historia, ok kallask sá meistari, er gert hefir bókina, flest alt hafa ritat eptir fyrirsögn Sveins Ulfssonar' ('Thus it is said in the *Historia* of Hamburg, and the master who wrote the book says that he has written almost everything in accordance with the dictation of

saga, possibly first written in Latin shortly before 1200, quotes a passage from a *Gesta saxonum* that seems to be identical to Adam's work as well.²¹

Adam's text belongs to the rather heterogeneous genre of the deeds of bishops, *gesta episcoporum*.²² Although *Hungrvaka* is the sole preserved text of this genre in Norwegian and Icelandic contexts, it is a clear witness to the cultivation of the genre in the North.²³ A number of vernacular lives of individual Icelandic bishops have been preserved and they form a separate sub-genre — *biskupa sögur* (the episcopal sagas or biographies)²⁴ — but *Hungrvaka* is the sole synoptic work narrating about a series of bishops. In this sense it can be compared with *Ágrip*, one of the early vernacular Old Norse kings' sagas, which is also a synoptic text dealing with a number of kings in a more concise way than the more detailed biographies of King Sverre or the Olavs.²⁵ In other words, *Hungrvaka* occupies the same position in relation to the remaining bishops' sagas as *Ágrip* does to the remaining kings' sagas.²⁶ The high status of the bishops in Iceland is in this way reflected not only by the Icelanders'

Sveinn Ulfsson'). The excerpts are preserved in the manuscript Reykjavík AM 415 4°. The text is edited by Kr. Kålund, *Alfræði íslenzk: Íslandsk encyclopædisk litteratur*, vol. III: *Landalýsingar m. fl.*, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 45 (Copenhagen: Møller, 1917–18), pp. 59–62. The date of the manuscript is from the index volume of *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* (Copenhagen: Arnamagnæan Commission, 1989).

²¹ *Yngvars saga* is preserved in Old Norse. Dietrich Hoffmann, 'Die *Yngvars saga víðförla* und Oddr munkr inn fróði', in *Speculum norroenum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. by Ursula Dronke and others (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981), pp. 188–222, argued that the preserved version of *Yngvars saga* is a translation from Latin. Some references to the ensuing discussion are given by Carl Phelpstead, 'Adventure-Time in *Yngvars saga víðförla*', in *Fornaldarsagaerne: Myter af virkelighed*, ed. by Agneta Ney and others (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2009), pp. 331–46 (p. 338).

²² For more details on Adam of Bremen's text, see Ildar Garipzanov's chapter in this volume.

²³ See, *Biskupa sögur*, II, ed. by Egilsdóttir, pp. xii–xiii. It has been argued by Else Mundal, 'Íslendingabók vurdert som bispestolskrønike', *Alvísmál*, 3 (1994), 63–72, that Ari fróði's *Íslendingabók* is also a text written along the lines of an episcopal chronicle, but *Hungrvaka* is a more obvious candidate for an Old Norse specimen of the genre of *gesta episcoporum*.

²⁴ The lives of Icelandic bishops are conveniently edited in *Biskupa sögur*, I–III, Íslensk fornrit, 15–17 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1998–2003). A fourth volume containing the various redactions of the life of St Guðmundr of Hólar is still pending.

²⁵ For more details on *Ágrip*, see Theodore Andersson's chapter in this volume.

²⁶ Pernille Hermann, 'Hungrvaka og íslændingesagaer: Traditionalitet og konventionalitet', *Maal og Minne*, 2004, 21–40, discusses whether *Hungrvaka* is to be classified as a saga or as *fróði* '(learned) knowledge'. She concludes that it must belong somewhere in between, but one may say as well that it is both a saga and *fróði*.

preference for episcopal saints, but also by the texts they wrote about their spiritual leaders. Thus their bishops became, in a way, the first ‘kings’ of Iceland.²⁷

The Prologue and its Metaphors

Hungrvaka begins with a prologue that has been characterized as ‘unusually long and learned’,²⁸ at least by Old Norse standards. It shows that the author was trained in the tradition of Latin literature and had a good knowledge of how a prologue should be structured. It begins by naming the work itself:²⁹

Bækling þenna kalla ek Hungrvöku, af því at svá mun mörpum mönnum ófróðum ok þó óvitrum gefit vera, þeim er hann hafa yfir farit, at miklu myndu gorr vilja vita upprás ok ævi þeira merkismanna er hér verðr fátt frá sagt á þessi skrá.³⁰

[I call this little book *Hungrvaka* (The Appetizer), because many unlearned and unknowledgeable men, who have read through it, will want to know even more about origins and lives of these notable men of whom only little is said in this writing.] (author’s translation)

The anonymous author thus wants to whet his readers’ appetite for knowledge of the early bishops of Iceland. This kind of alimentary metaphor was as common in medieval times as it is now,³¹ and to a medieval audience the biblical use of such

²⁷ The kinglike status of the Icelandic bishops is also discussed by Ármann Jakobsson, *Í leit að konungi: Konungsmynd íslenskra konungasagna* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 1997), pp. 291–300. That bishops in general share many traits with kings and ‘dioceses looked a lot more regal, a lot more “state-like” than did most kingdoms at the time [around 1000]’ is emphasized by Timothy Reuter, ‘Bishops, Rites of Passage, and the Symbolism of State in Pre-Gregorian Europe’, in *The Bishop: Power and Piety in the First Millennium*, ed. by Sean Gilsdorf, Neue Aspekte der europäischen Mittelalterforschung, 4 (Münster: Lit, 2004), pp. 23–36 (p. 23).

²⁸ ‘óvenjulega langur og lærður’, so Sverrir Tómasson, *Formálar íslenskra sagnritara á miðöldum: Rannsókn bókmenntahefðar*, Rit, 33 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1988), p. 385.

²⁹ Other Old Norse examples of this convention are listed by Sverrir Tómasson, *Formálar íslenskra sagnritara á miðöldum*, p. 180. The introduction of the Old Norwegian *King’s Mirror*, *Konungs skuggsjá*, can be added to this list.

³⁰ *Hungrvaka*, p. 3.

³¹ We might thirst after knowledge, and a medieval writer could say, as one indeed did in the Old Norwegian Homily Book: ‘Greed knows no limits and can not be satisfied, even if it devours everything. Greed is always hungry.’ *Gamal norsk homiliebook*, ed. by Gustav Indrebø (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1966; 1st pub. 1931), p. 19: ‘Ágirni kann eigi hátt ok eigi kann hon seðjask, þó at hon svelgi alla hluti. Hungruð er hon ávalt.’ See Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 134–36.

metaphors might have resonated particularly powerfully, such as 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, at some time they will be satisfied' from the Sermon on the Mount.³² Ideally, the readers of *Hungrvaka* would hunger for knowledge when they were done reading.

The anonymous author goes one step further and twists this metaphor cleverly in the second part of his prologue, where he compares his work with the horn material from which a spoon can be made (*hornspánnar efni*). The composition of a literary work was often thought of in terms of building a house,³³ and the substance out of which a literary work is made is *materia*, '(building) material', in Latin and *efni* in Old Norse. The author of a work might then express his conventional humility by saying that he has only collected or prepared the material, and that he leaves it for someone else to finish it or to actually build the house. This topos can be varied in a number of ways. One example can be found in Jerome's commentary on the Book of Jeremiah. Jerome writes to the recipient of the work that he provides him with the warp, the weft, and the leash, and that now it's up to the recipient to make a beautiful garment and thus complete it.³⁴ Comparing the work to the horn material of which a spoon can be made might be a specific Icelandic take on the topos, but the idea that a beautiful finished result lies latent in the material and just needs to be brought forth by a skilled hand can of course be found elsewhere. One interesting example can be found in the *Ars versificatoria* (*The Art of Versification*, c. 1175) by Matthew of Vendôme:

Siquidem, sicut in rebus materialibus materia statuæ rudis est et nullo pretio insignita, donec sedulitate artificis melius placeat expolita, similiter in metro verborum materia rudis est et inconcinna donec artificiali appositione alicujus scematis vel tropi sive coloris rhetorici depingatur.³⁵

[Just as, when dealing with material things, the material of which a statue can be made is raw and seemingly worth nothing, before it becomes more pleasing by being polished by the assiduity of a craftsman, in the same way, concerning poems the verbal material is raw

³² 'Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt iustitiam quoniam ipsi saturabuntur' (*Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, Mt 5. 6, ed. by Robertus Weber and others, 4th edn (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994).

³³ A few examples from the Old Norse as well as the Latin tradition are given by Tómasson, *Formálar íslenskra sagnritara á miðöldum*, pp. 149–50.

³⁴ See Tore Janson, *Latin Prose Prefaces: Studies in Literary Conventions*, *Studies Latina Stockholmiensia*, 13 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1964), p. 151.

³⁵ *Les Arts poétiques du XI^e et du XIII^e siècle*, ed. by Edmond Faral (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1958), pp. 167–68.

and awkward before it has been decorated with the artful addition of some figure, trope, or rhetorical ornament.]

In the case of *Hungrvaka*, the author has a splendid source of material at hand (*forkunnar efni*),³⁶ namely the history of the bishops of Skálholt. If the result is not as grand as one may expect, the inferior skills of the craftsman or author are to blame, and readers who find his work faulty are asked to improve upon it rather than ridicule it.³⁷ The author himself will also try to embellish the work and patch it up (*bóta*) as long as he is still capable of doing so.³⁸

These two metaphors — the appetizer and the spoon — naturally go quite well together, and both can be seen as expressions of humility on behalf of the author.³⁹ The ambition of the author is only to whet the appetite of the reader, not to satisfy it, and his work is only the tool (spoon) with which one can eat, for instance, the porridge; it is not the porridge itself.

In the final two sentences of the prologue the author explains how he has structured his text, and now uses the house analogy. He justifies the way he has chosen to structure the narrative by quoting an otherwise unattested Old Norse proverb: 'It is an old saying that the house holds the residents. Therefore I will first tell of how the farm at Skálholt was built and later about those who have been the keepers of the place.'⁴⁰ Medieval prologues often contained an overview of the work's

³⁶ *Hungrvaka*, p. 5.

³⁷ This is one of the standard exordial topoi of medieval historiography, and Adam of Bremen makes a somewhat similar statement in his preface: 'sed quod bene ego non potui, melius scribendi ceteris materiam reliqui', Adam, *Gesta*, Praefatio, p. 3 ('that which I myself could not do well I left for others to write about better', Adam, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. by Tschan, p. 5).

³⁸ *Hungrvaka*, p. 5.

³⁹ In a similar vein, Hermann, '*Hungrvaka* og isländingesagaer', pp. 25–26.

⁴⁰ Author's translation of *Hungrvaka*, p. 5: 'En þat er forn orðskviðr at hús skal hjóna fá. Segi ek af því fyrst hversu bœrinn hefir byggz í Skálaholti, en síðan frá þeim er staðinn hafa varðveittan.' Hermann, '*Hungrvaka* og isländingesagaer', pp. 27–32, argues that the proverb functions as a truism whose 'funktion er at danne forståelsesbaggrunden for argumentationen i værket' (p. 27). The use of such truisms was a common way to begin a written work, and such use of truisms or proverbs is described and recommended in medieval manuals of composition such as Matthew of Vendôme's *Ars versificatoria* (*Les Arts poétiques*, ed. by Faral, pp. 113–16), Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova* (*Les Arts poétiques*, ed. by Faral, pp. 201–03), and elsewhere. One Old Norse example could be the versified prologue to *Duggals leizla* (c. 1300), a translation of the *Visio Tnugdali*. The text describes the pleasures or pains that await each and every person after death, and commences with the statement that one will reap whatever one has sown. This sentiment of biblical origin

structure as well as some justification for the latter, so it is not surprising to find this technique used in *Hungrvaka*. It is, however, interesting that *Hungrvaka* seems to echo a statement found in the prologue to the chronicle of the archbishops of Magdeburg, *Gesta archiepiscoporum Magdeburgensium*.⁴¹ The brief preface of that chronicle states that because important personages such as Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, and Otto the Great all contributed to the development of Magdeburg, the narrative ought to begin with these founders rather than with the bishops of Magdeburg: 'Therefore I considered it appropriate to begin with these founders and then turn to the bishops.'⁴² The Magdeburg chronicle does not contain a saying similar to the above-mentioned passage of *Hungrvaka*, but the basic idea is the same: first is the vessel, then its contents.⁴³ By applying the old saying, the Old Norse text adds an extra metaphorical dimension, which cannot be found in the chronicle of Magdeburg. The dwellers of Skálholt are of course first and foremost the bishops, but the Old Norse word used in the proverb, *hjón* — translated 'residents' above — often means household or a married couple. This connects well with the widespread notion that the bishop is married to his cathedral or diocese, which can be found elsewhere in *Hungrvaka* and in other texts believed to have been written at Skálholt or in its immediate vicinity. When Bishop Magnús enlarges his cathedral and invites all the important people of Iceland to the feast of its dedication, this feast is called a wedding (*brullaup*).⁴⁴ As Jón Helgason has argued, this is not a reference to an actual wedding between a man and a woman,

forms a fitting introduction to a text whose overall theme is reward or punishment. If the proverb that introduces *Hungrvaka* is more than a justification for the structure of the text, its meaning in all likelihood is that the house (the cathedral or diocese) is primary to its dwellers (the bishops), and that as long as the house stands there will also be bishops. The importance of the 'house' is underlined several times in the text when it describes how the bishops rebuilt and enlarged the cathedral.

⁴¹ It was in Magdeburg that Bishop Gizurr was consecrated (see below).

⁴² *Gesta archiepiscoporum Magdeburgensium*, ed. by Wilhelm Schum, MGH SS, 14 (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), pp. 376–415 (p. 376): 'quapropter ab eisdem fundatoribus dignum duxi exordium sumere et exinde ad pontifices me transferre'.

⁴³ Interestingly, one manuscript version of *Hungrvaka* (called D) has instead of the prologue only the following sentence: 'I fyrstu vil ek nú segja frá því hversu bórinn hefir byggzk í Skálholti, ok síðan frá þeim er hann hafa haldit', *Hungrvaka*, ed. by Jón Helgason, in *Byskupa sagur*, pp. 72–115 (p. 72) ('I will first tell of how the farm at Skálholt was built and later I will tell about those who have been the keepers of the place'; author's translation).

⁴⁴ *Hungrvaka*, p. 30.

but the wedding of the bishop and his cathedral.⁴⁵ One good example from a Latin text the author of *Hungrvaka* could have been familiar with can be found in Adam of Bremen's versified epilogue to his narrative. There Adam addresses the dedicatee of the work, Archbishop Liemar, as follows:

Et confido etiam, quia commendatio scripti
 Carior inde [tibi] manet, dum nil ibi fictum
 Externumque vides, sed quaevis pagina veram
 Ecclesiae laudem canit hystoriamque Bremensem.
 Omne decus sponsi [est], ubi fertur gloria sponsae.⁴⁶

[I am confident that your commendation of the writing will remain even more lovable, when you see that it contains nothing fictitious or irrelevant, but that each and every page sings the true praise of the church and the history of Bremen. Every honour befalls the groom when the glory of the bride is extolled.] (author's translation)

Adam, like the author of *Hungrvaka*, thus compares the relationship between the archbishop and his archdiocese to the liaison between a husband and wife. There is a long tradition of such nuptial metaphors in Christian as well as in non-Christian contexts. In pagan times the Old Norse skald Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld repeated in mythological terms no less than four times how the ruler (Earl Hakon) married/subdued Norway personified by a female giantess.⁴⁷ Within the Christian sphere there is a well-established tradition of interpreting the biblical Song of Songs as an allegory of the relationship of Christ (the bridegroom) and the Church (the bride).⁴⁸ It is likely that the author of *Hungrvaka* was familiar with the poetry of Hallfreðr, since it belongs to the canon of the skaldic tradition, and using the nuptial metaphors would be yet another way of cementing the status of the bishops as the kings of Iceland; but the Christian tradition certainly chimes in loudly as well. As justification for the structure of the narrative and the use of marital metaphors, the *Hungrvaka* author did not need to be inspired precisely by the episcopal chronicles of Hamburg-Bremen and Magdeburg; but, as will be shown below, it is exactly these two Saxon archdioceses with which the cathedral at Skálholt had close ties.

⁴⁵ Jón Helgason, 'Et sted i Hungrvaka', in *Opuscula*, vol. I, Bibliotheca Arnarnagana, 20 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1960), pp. 352–53. Jón Helgason provides two similar examples from the sagas of the bishops of Skálholt.

⁴⁶ Adam, *Gesta*, p. 281.

⁴⁷ *Hákonardrápa*, st. 3–6, in *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, B1, ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske boghandel, 1908), pp. 147–48; Folke Ström, 'Hieros gamos-motivet i Hallfreðr Óttarssons Hákonardrápa och den nordnorska jarlavärdigheten', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 98 (1983), 67–79.

⁴⁸ Most famously in Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on *The Song of Songs*.

The Model and the Message

In Icelandic literature, *Hungrvaka* is without counterparts.⁴⁹ Since there seems to have been no obvious Icelandic models for this narrative, we can turn our gaze towards foreign models. As mentioned above, the author of *Hungrvaka* is likely to have known and used Adam of Bremen's history. Both narratives belong to the genre of *gesta episcoporum*, even if some sections of Adam's work extend beyond the scope of the shorter works of this genre. From the papal biographies in the *Liber pontificalis*, the *gesta episcoporum* had inherited a relatively fixed structure.⁵⁰ The main organizing principle of such *gesta* was the order of the various pontificates and the passing of time. Certain elements were almost always present in the descriptions of the individual bishops, and they were presented in a rather schematic way: the descent of the bishops, the date of their consecration, the length of their pontificate, and the date of their death. This catalogue-like information regarding the beginning, end, and extent of their offices was usually supplemented with information about some of their deeds while they were in office, such as the erection of churches, the introduction of liturgical novelties, the consecration of other bishops, and other notable events.⁵¹ These are precisely the elements found in *Hungrvaka*, where the presentation of biographical details is structured in exactly the same way every time a new bishop is introduced. They begin with an introduction, which describes a bishop's descent, youth, character/looks, circumstances of election, and journey abroad, as well as the person consecrating him and the date of this consecration.

⁴⁹ The first of the Latin fragments edited in *Biskupa sögur*, II, as *Latinubrot I* (pp. 341–45) is often tentatively thought of in terms of a *gesta episcoporum*, thus *Biskupa sögur*, II, ed. by Egilsdóttir, p. cxii, but there is not much evidence to support this idea, and the preserved parts deal mainly with St Þorlákr. Indeed, the chapter with the heading *De sancto Thorlaco episcopo et aliis episcopis nostris* (p. 342), 'About St Þorlákr and Our Other Bishops', rather indicates that these other bishops were dealt with rather briefly and in relation to St Þorlákr.

⁵⁰ On the *gesta episcoporum*, see Michel Sot, 'Local and Institutional History', in *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 89–114; and Bert Roest, 'Later Medieval Institutional History', in *ibid.*, pp. 277–315. See also Michel Sot, *Gesta episcoporum, gesta abbatum*, *Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental*, 37 (Brepols: Turnhout, 1981); and Reinhold Kaiser, 'Die *Gesta episcoporum* als Genus der Geschichtsschreibung', in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter, *Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 32 (Vienna: Oldenbourg, 1994), pp. 459–80.

⁵¹ See Kaiser, 'Die *Gesta episcoporum*', p. 465.

Similarly, the sections describing the final years of all the bishops follow the same pattern and order, with a few exceptions: they discuss the duration of office, the election of a successor, events at the deathbed, a bishop's age at the time of death, the place of his burial and its date, and finally a section with annalistic information is provided. The language and the sentence structure approach the formulaic in some of these sections, in particular in the annalistic part.⁵²

The middle sections, where the actual deeds of the bishops during their pontificates are described, are more loosely structured. During Ísleifr's pontificate the dominant themes are the complicated financial situation of the bishop and the disobedience of the Icelandic people:

Hann hafði nauð mikla á marga vegu í sínum byskupsdómi fyrir sakir óhlýðni manna. Má þat af því merkja nökkut í hverjum nauðum hann hefir verit fyrir sakir ótrú ok óhlýðni ok ósiða sinna undirmanna, at lög[sögu]maðrinn átti mæðgur tvær, ok þá lögðusk sumir menn út í víking ok á herskap, ok mǫrg endemi tóku menn þau til qnnur, þau er nú myndi óðemi þykkja ef menn hendi slíkt.⁵³

[He had much trouble in many ways in his bishopric because of the disobedience of men. And it may be somewhat of a token of what need he hath been in by reason of the lack of faith, and the disobedience, an evil conversation of those under him, that the Law-speaker had to wife mother and daughter. And in those days some men lay at sea on wicking cruises and in war ships, and many betook themselves to many other abominations which would now be thought shocking if men were to commit them.]⁵⁴

It will be remembered that Adam of Bremen described how the Icelandic bishops were respected as kings (and that *Hungrvaka* echoes this). Since Adam wrote in the 1070s, he could not have known of any other Icelandic bishops than this Ísleifr, who it will be remembered ruled until 1080 and whose tribulations were quoted above. Adam of Bremen does not concur with the information given in *Hungrvaka* on the disobedience of the Icelanders towards Ísleifr — rather, he takes the opposite view — and it therefore seems reasonable to assume that the Icelandic text has magnified the troubles of Ísleifr in order to enlarge the importance and success of his son and successor Gizurr, who is presented as the one who solved these problems. When elected as bishop by Icelanders, Gizurr refuses the position until the chieftains promise him complete obedience. The financial situation of the

⁵² The events that are considered noteworthy in these annalistic sections are primarily the deaths of kings or other notable persons. Two volcanic eruptions and an earthquake are also mentioned and, as the only information of that kind, the translation of the relics of St Nicholas from Myra to Bari.

⁵³ *Hungrvaka*, p. 8.

⁵⁴ Vigfusson and Powell, *Origines Islandicae*, p. 429.

cathedral is also improved because Gizurr inherits a large amount of land, which he donates to the cathedral. On this estate he establishes Skálholt as the permanent location of the bishop. Finally, with the help of two prominent Icelanders — Sæmundr the Learned and the lawspeaker Markús Skeggjason — he manages to introduce the payment of tithe in Iceland: ‘And there hath been no such foundation in Scal-holt for wealth and profit as this tithe-tax, which was laid on by reason of the popularity and power of bishop Gizor.’⁵⁵ The difference that *Hungrvaka* draws up in this way between the two bishops, Ísleifr and Gizurr, alerts us to the fact that the narrative is far from being a simple record of events and deeds, but that it has also received a more literary finish: Ísleifr had to struggle with disobedience and financial problems during his pontificate, but his son Gizurr overcame these problems after being elected bishop by the very same chieftains with whom his father Ísleifr struggled. *Hungrvaka* also briefly outlines how Gizurr was elected: at first, when Ísleifr died the chieftains had appointed a certain priest by the name of Guthormr, who reluctantly accepted ‘if there were thought to be no better choice’.⁵⁶ What nobody knew at the time was that the son of Ísleifr, Gizurr, had just returned from a journey abroad and was hiding on his ship so as to not interfere with the election. But as soon as Guthormr learned that Gizurr had returned to Iceland, he publically renounced his position. The entire populace (*alþýðan*) now manages to convince the equally reluctant Gizurr that he should become bishop instead of Guthormr.

Although every bishop is described in positive terms in the chronicle,⁵⁷ Gizurr is definitely the focus point of *Hungrvaka*, and he is only eclipsed by the later St Þorlákr.⁵⁸ Before Gizurr became bishop, he journeyed abroad and visited important people who all thought highly of him. When the Norwegian king Harald Hardrada saw Gizurr, he is reported by *Hungrvaka* to have said that Gizurr would be most

⁵⁵ Vigfusson and Powell, *Origines Islandicae*, p. 436. *Hungrvaka*, p. 17: ‘ok hefir eigi annarr slíkr grundvöllr verit auðræða ok hægenda í Skálaholti sem tíundargjaldit, þat er til lagðisk þá fyrir vinsæld ok skörungskap Gizurar byskups’.

⁵⁶ Vigfusson and Powell, *Origines Islandicae*, p. 434. *Hungrvaka*, p. 15: ‘ef eigi þætti qnnur fqng vildari á vera’.

⁵⁷ Some of them work wonders as well, and the body of Magnús was unharmed by the fire in which he and eighty-two other men died.

⁵⁸ The greatness of Gizurr is a theme met elsewhere in the literature of the period. See Stefán Karlsson, ‘Fróðleiksgreinar frá tólfu öld’, in *Stafkrókar: Ritgerðir eftir Stefán Karlsson*, ed. by Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 2000), pp. 95–118 (pp. 105–07).

suited to bear whichever rank he might get.⁵⁹ This judgement of the Norwegian king is echoed and amplified in a later Icelandic kings' saga, *Morkinskinna* (c. 1220):

Þá er Gizurr Ísleifsson kom á fund Haralds konungs var rótt um at hann væri merkiligr maðr. Þá sagði Haraldr konungr: 'Svá er þat sem ér segið, en þar má gera vel af þrjá menn. Hann má vera víkingahöfðingi ok er hann vel til þess fenginn. Þá má hann ok vera konungr af sínu skaplyndi ok er vel fengit. Með þriðja hætti má hann vera byskup, ok þat mun hann helzt hljóta ok mun vera inn mesti ágætismaðr.'⁶⁰

[When Gizurr Ísleifsson came to King Haraldr, the king was told that he was a distinguished man. Then King Haraldr said: 'What you tell of him could be made into three men. He could be a viking chieftain, and has the makings for it. Given his temperament, he could be a king, and that would be fitting. The third possibility is a bishop, and that is probably what he will become, and he will be a most outstanding man.']⁶¹

Gizurr's magnificence is not only corroborated by the approval of a foreign king, but also underlined by the fact that his death is followed by a terrible storm, a great famine, and other disasters. It was as if the country itself was mourning the death of the bishop:

Svá hugðisk at inum vitrustum mönnum, at svá þótti drúpa Ísland eptir fráfall Gizurar byskups sem Rómaborgarriki eptir fall Gregorii páfa.⁶²

[And it was the belief of the wisest men that it looked as if Iceland was drooping after the death of bishop Gizurr, as the realm of the city of Rome did after the fall of pope Gregory.]⁶³

Here Gizurr is explicitly compared to another great bishop, Pope Gregory the Great. The theme of nature going awry at the death of an important person is a well-known theme in medieval literature⁶⁴ and is found a number of times in Old

⁵⁹ *Hungrvaka*, p. 14: 'Haraldr konungr Sigurðarson var þá konungr í Nóregi, ok mælti hann þeim orðum við Gizur at honum kvazk svá sýnask til at hann myndi bezt til fallinn at bera hvert tignarnafn sem hann hlyti.'

⁶⁰ *Morkinskinna*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 53 (Copenhagen: Jørgensen, 1932), p. 251.

⁶¹ *Morkinskinna: The Earliest Icelandic Chronicle of the Norwegian Kings (1030–1157)*, trans. by Theodore M. Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade, Islandica, 51 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 255.

⁶² *Hungrvaka*, p. 21.

⁶³ Vigfusson and Powell, *Origines Islandicae*, p. 439.

⁶⁴ Cf. Jonna Louis-Jensen, 'Ari og Gregor', in *Con amore: En artikelsamling udgivet på 70-årsdagen*, ed. by Michael Chesnutt and Florian Grammel (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2006; 1st pub. 1976), pp. 29–37 (p. 34, n. 14).

Norse as well. In other words, this is yet another example of a passage where the author moulds the material in hand according to a recognizable pattern.

Hungrvaka is quite an inward-looking chronicle. Domestic Icelandic matters of importance to the Church, such as the introduction of tithe or the establishment of the northern diocese of Hólar, are recorded.⁶⁵ But even though Iceland was situated far from the rest of the world, it was nonetheless a part of that world as well, and during the period of time covered by *Hungrvaka* important changes took place. One of them was that the archbishop moved continually closer to Iceland: at first Skálholt was under the rule of the Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, but in 1104 the Nordic archdiocese of Lund was established and later on in 1152/53 the archdiocese of Nidaros. Even though these changes must have influenced the life and administration at Skálholt significantly, nothing is told about this in the text. In the earliest phase the Icelanders naturally had close connections with Saxony. *Hungrvaka* mentions that the first bishop, Ísleifr, had received his schooling in Herford, Westphalia — where there was a famous nunnery and school at the time⁶⁶ — and later he paid the German emperor a visit and presented him with a polar bear. The second bishop, Gizurr, also received his schooling in Saxony, even if we are not told where, and he was consecrated in Magdeburg by Archbishop Hartwig.⁶⁷ From this point in time the continent vanishes from the text, save for some of the annalistic entries. No less than six Icelandic bishops were consecrated in Denmark, and the last bishop mentioned in *Hungrvaka* — Brandr of Hólar — was consecrated by Archbishop Eystein in Nidaros. Jón Ögmundarson of Hólar might have been the first bishop to be consecrated by the new Scandinavian archbishop,⁶⁸ but our author is not interested in this fact. Narrating about Gizurr, the author does explain that the Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen at the time, Liemar, had been suspended from his office, so that Gizurr had to go to Magdeburg to be consecrated by Archbishop

⁶⁵ Being the older of the two bishoprics, Skálholt was considered the primary Icelandic diocese. Adam of Bremen regularly mentions the bishops in his neighbouring archdiocese of Magdeburg in a similar manner; see Gerhard-Peter Handschuh, *Bistumsgeschichtsschreibung im ottonisch-sächsischen Reichskirchensystem: Studien zu den sächsischen Gesta episcoporum des 11. bis frühen 13. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: [n.pub.], 1982), p. 44.

⁶⁶ On Ísleifr's continental schooling, see Roland Köhne, 'Wirklichkeit und Fiktion in den mittelalterlichen Nachrichten über Ísleif Gizurarson', *Skandinavistik*, 17 (1987), 24–30.

⁶⁷ Even though the chronicle of the archbishops of Magdeburg does mention some of the bishops Hartwig consecrated, no mention is made of Gizurr. *Gesta archiepiscoporum Magdeburgensium*, ed. by Schum, pp. 361–486 (p. 406).

⁶⁸ Peter Foote, 'Aachen, Lund, Hólar', in *Aurvandilstá: Norse Studies*, ed. by Michael Barnes and others (Odense: Odense University Press, 1984; 1st pub. 1975), pp. 101–20 (p. 107).

Hartwig. But besides their roles as consecrators, these foreign metropolitans only appear to play a very minor part in the day-to-day business of the Icelanders. Ozur of Lund is the only archbishop listed among those important people who died during the rule of one of the bishops of Skálholt, and it is also told that he gave advice when the Icelandic Christian laws were composed. Adalbert of Bremen forbids foreign bishops to go to Iceland, but otherwise *Hungrvaka* does not record any interference of the Church at large with Icelandic ecclesiastical matters. The Icelanders appear to have been left to decide upon all matters, great or small, on their own.

The narrative *Hungrvaka* told about the Icelanders, the island, and their bishops in this way is a story about an independent nation ruled by bishops, comparable to the kings' saga *Ágrip*. There is even an incipient hereditary system, since Gizurr was the son of Ísleifr. *Hungrvaka* thus describes Iceland as a kingdom in the making, even though this process has never been completed.⁶⁹ In some respects the bishops were like kings, but in contrast to kings the bishops of Iceland were elected by the people. *Hungrvaka* continuously emphasizes that it is at the national assembly that the bishops are elected, and that the elections are the result of the will of the people. Whereas Christianization in Norway was intrinsically connected with the kings who had first united the kingdom of Norway, the process in Iceland was almost the opposite. The Icelandic Christian identity that *Hungrvaka* seeks both to form and to perpetuate is one of a people who are intrinsically united, and when after the conversion the time comes, a bishop naturally — as if by the force of nature — takes the position of local authority. The difference between the images of Norway and Iceland that are drawn up by medieval texts is in this regard conspicuous.

The identity of the Icelanders as an independent Christian nation presented in *Hungrvaka* can effectively be compared to another kingless northern society, that of Greenland. *Grœnlendinga þáttur*, 'The Tale about the Greenlanders',⁷⁰ presents a perhaps more realistic picture of how a small community on the edge of the world first acquired a bishop of its own. This tale about a conflict in Norse Greenland between, on the one hand, the Bishop of Garðar (Greenland) and the Greenlanders and, on the other, some Norwegian merchants begins with a short story describing how the Greenlanders got a bishop of their own.⁷¹ One day Sokki Þórisson, one of

⁶⁹ Gizurr had many sons, but only one, Bǫðvarr, survived him. *Hungrvaka* does not tell what happened to him. His daughter Gróa was married to Ketill Þorsteinsson, who became the second bishop of Hólar.

⁷⁰ Also known as *Einars þáttur Sokkasonar*, 'The Tale of Einar Sokkason'.

⁷¹ No precise dates are given in the text, but other sources tell that the Greenlanders got their first bishop in 1124.

the most powerful men of Greenland, summoned the Greenlanders to an assembly and expressed his opinion that it would be better if Greenland was no longer without a bishop. Everybody agreed, and Sokki's son was sent to the Norwegian king, Sigurd Jerusalemfarer, in order to get his support in this matter. The King saw the Norwegian priest Arnaldr as suitable to become Bishop of Greenland and appointed him. The Greenlanders and the initially reluctant Arnaldr then travelled to the Archbishop of Lund to have him consecrated in Denmark.⁷² In this tale, which is traditionally (but tentatively) dated to the late twelfth century,⁷³ the picture of the small North Atlantic settlement is radically different from that of *Hungrvaka*. The Greenlanders, having realized that it would now be fitting for them to have a bishop, send a delegation to the Norwegian king in order to secure his support, and the King then provides the Greenlanders with a suitable candidate. This is very far from the Icelandic way of doing things as described in *Hungrvaka*. When the Icelandic national assembly had appointed Ísleifr, he set out on a journey not to the Norwegian king, but to the pope. On his way Ísleifr visited the court of the German emperor, but — as *Hungrvaka* relates it — did so simply out of courtesy, not in order to receive permission or support from the emperor. The Icelanders of *Hungrvaka* can act on their own, whereas the Greenlanders have to consult the king.

Even if *Hungrvaka* in this way stresses the independence of the Icelanders and more than hints at the identity of Iceland as a kingdom *in spe*, there must have been a continuing and strong influence from the outside world. The Saxon area disappears from *Hungrvaka* when a Nordic archbishopric is founded, but if we look to other sources we see some quite tangible indicators of a continuing Saxon or German influence on Iceland. I should like to mention three. First, the earliest preserved Icelandic manuscripts clearly show that Icelandic script in the main is based on a continental script, whereas the earliest Norwegian script has a strong insular imprint.⁷⁴ Second,

⁷² *Grœnlendinga þáttur*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, Íslenzk fornrit, 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1935), pp. 271–92 (pp. 273–75).

⁷³ See Ólafur Halldórsson, 'Einars þáttur Sokkasonar', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano (New York: Garland, 1993), p. 160. More recently Else Ebel, 'Der Grœnlendinga Þáttur – aktuelle oder antiquarische Gesichtsperspektive?', in *Die Aktualität der Saga: Festschrift für Hans Schottmann*, ed. by Stig Toftgaard Andersen, Ergänzungsbände zum RGA, 21 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), pp. 13–25, has advanced good arguments for a date of composition around the middle of the thirteenth century. The text has been preserved only in the late fourteenth-century manuscript of *Flateyjarbók*.

⁷⁴ See Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script as Illustrated in Vernacular Texts from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Reykjavík: Manuscript Institute of Iceland, 1965), pp. 18–40.

among the manuscripts that the great Icelandic manuscript collector Árni Magnússon got from the cathedral at Skálholt was a psalter with a prefixed calendar. It is well known that Árni Magnússon was not particularly interested in psalters and other liturgical manuscripts — and that from time to time he used them for purposes we would not approve of today — but he did cut out and keep the calendars that were usually in the same codices as the psalters. These calendars were spared because names of Icelanders and northern saints were included there from time to time. One such calendar is Reykjavík AM 249b fol. from around 1200, contemporary with the writing of *Hungrvaka*. Among the saints entered in this calendar is the feast of the quite obscure St Pusinna on 23 April. What makes Pusinna interesting in this context is that she never appears to have been widely venerated outside Herford, where her relics were kept in the church of St Mary and Pusinna. This is exactly the place where Ísleifr, and in all likelihood also Gizurr, received their schooling. This might of course be a coincidence, but it is very tempting to think that one of the two bishops had brought a calendar with him when he returned from Herford, which was later copied, or that the Icelanders continued to keep in touch with Herford after the two first bishops had left the school at Herford.⁷⁵

Finally, the mere existence of an Icelandic text in the genre of *gesta episcoporum* indicates ties with Germany. The writing of episcopal chronicles seems to have especially flowered in Saxony at the end of the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth century.⁷⁶ Some of these Saxon chronicles were continued later on as well, and it has been argued that the later texts are characterized by a ‘decline accentuated by a loss of wider perspective and a movement towards more local and modest bishop catalogues’.⁷⁷ The wider outlook of the *gesta episcoporum* was a natural consequence of the important political position of the bishops within the Empire and their close relations with the emperor. But once this political significance was reduced with the collapse of the imperial episcopal system, it seemed natural to narrow down the scope of the chronicles.⁷⁸ The bishops of Iceland, albeit important on their remote island, never had any wider political significance. So although

⁷⁵ Lilli Gjerløw, *Liturgica islandica I. Text*, Bibliotheca Arnarnagana, 35 (Hafnia: Reitzel, 1980), pp. 189–208, studied this calendar, and she concluded that the selection of saints mainly reflected continental practice, but that some insular saints who were not commonly venerated on the continent were included too.

⁷⁶ Sot, ‘Local and Institutional History’, pp. 106–07.

⁷⁷ Roest, ‘Later Medieval Institutional History’, p. 286.

⁷⁸ Roest, ‘Later Medieval Institutional History’, p. 286.

the endeavours of the author of *Hungrvaka* are similar to those of the authors of the larger Saxon *gesta episcoporum*, the inward-looking character of the Icelandic text and the lack of imperial focus can be explained by the simple fact that Iceland was not part of an empire. *Hungrvaka* might also rather be connected with the younger and more modest continuations of the *gesta episcoporum* than with the earlier more ponderous texts. In either case, the inspiration and model for *Hungrvaka* is in all likelihood to be sought in the German territory.⁷⁹ Thus these examples suggest a continuing German influence in Iceland around 1200 when *Hungrvaka* was written.

Conclusion

The identity the author himself projects in *Hungrvaka* is determined by his close connection to the cathedral of Skálholt and the bishops there and is thus primarily an institutional identity. In the prologue of the chronicle he states that he feels an obligation to write the history of the cathedral and the bishops, since he has 'by the grace of God gotten from them all my furtherance in this world';⁸⁰ and it is the local cathedral that defines a wider perspective throughout the text. Besides Ísleifr's initial problems with the disobedient chieftains, the Icelanders seem to have respected the sovereignty of the bishops, and the author therefore puts more effort into projecting an image of Iceland as a people ruled by bishops and no other worldly power.

The independent status of the island is also underlined by the choice of language made by the author. He wrote in the Icelandic vernacular, which was quite an unusual choice for this kind of literature at the time. It was in fact so unusual that he felt it required a justification:

Þat berr ok annat til þessa rits at teygja til þess unga menn at kynnisk vart mál at ráða, þat er á norrœnu er ritat, lög eða sǫgur eða mannfœði. Set ek af því heldr þetta á skrá en annan fróðleik, þann er áðr er á skrá settr, at mér sýnisk mínum börnum eða qðrum ungmennum

⁷⁹ Some episcopal chronicles are known from Denmark and Sweden as well, but they are later than *Hungrvaka* and much more modest in scope. The only work that is partly comparable to *Hungrvaka* is the *Chronicon ecclesie ripensis* (c. 1220), but it is much shorter and less ambitious than *Hungrvaka*.

⁸⁰ Vigfusson and Powell, *Origines Islandicae*, p. 426. *Hungrvaka*, p. 4: 'ek hefi með Guðs miskunn alla gæfu af þeim hlotit þessa heims'.

vera í skyldasta lagi at vita þat eða forvitnask, hvernig eða með hverjum hætti at hér hefir magnazk kristnin ok byskupsstólar settir verit hér á Íslandi.⁸¹

[Another purpose with this writing is to entice the young to learn how to read our language, what is written in Norse, laws and stories and genealogical lore. I will rather write this kind of learning, than that which has been committed to writing earlier because I think that my children and other young people are obliged to or should be eager to learn how and in which way Christianity has gained strength here and the episcopal sees have been established here in Iceland.] (author's translation)

He says that he writes *Hungrvaka* in the vernacular in order to stimulate interest for vernacular texts. Up until his time the vernacular had been used for certain kinds of literature (laws, stories, and genealogy), but apparently this is not exciting enough to get young readers into the habit of reading in their own language. At the cathedral, where the author presumably lived and wrote, Latin would at this time have been the language the students were taught. By using the vernacular in the prestigious genre of ecclesiastical historiography, the author wanted not only to stimulate interest in literature in the vernacular but also to increase the status of the written vernacular vis-à-vis Latin. One of the overall goals of the text thus seems to have been to define the Icelanders as an independent people ruled by kinglike bishops and using their own language.

As time passed the Icelanders had to submit to Norwegian rule, and the influence of the archbishops of Nidaros on the election of Icelandic bishops became increasingly visible. From 1236 onward, most of the bishops in Iceland were foreigners,⁸² but the language and the vernacular literature lasted for centuries. Despite the meagre transmission of *Hungrvaka*, it was an important step in the process of vernacularization. If the Old Icelandic literature is compared with the literature produced in other European countries, it is evident that the use of the vernacular for literary purposes increased after *Hungrvaka*. The vernacular as a medium for literature was in fact so successful that only a few humble remnants of Latin literature written in Iceland are preserved today.⁸³ By contrast, there is a very sizeable amount of vernacular literature, enough to satiate even the most voracious readers.

⁸¹ *Hungrvaka*, pp. 3–4.

⁸² See Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók: Iceland and the Norwegian Dynastic Crisis of 1389*, Viking Collection, 15 (Odense: University of Southern Denmark Press, 2005), pp. 230–34.

⁸³ See Gottskálk Þ. Jónsson, 'The Lost Latin Literature of Medieval Iceland: The Fragments of the *Vita sancti Thorlaci* and Other Evidence', *Symbolae Osloenses*, 79 (2004), 150–70.

Part Three

Early Historical Narratives in East-Central Europe

A NEW CHOSEN PEOPLE? GALLUS ANONYMUS'S NARRATIVE ABOUT POLAND AND ITS RULERS

Zbigniew Dalewski

The chronicle of an anonymous author referred to as Gallus is the earliest narrative describing the history of Poland from mythical pre-Christian times to the second decade of the twelfth century.¹ It was composed in the 1110s, in all likelihood at the court of Duke Bolesław III Wrymouth of Poland (1102–38), or at least with the inspiration and commission of the Duke's intimate milieu.² Its composition was most probably connected to the deep political crisis that occurred in Poland as a result of dynastic conflict between Bolesław and his elder half brother, Zbigniew. Probably in 1111, Bolesław — who had driven Zbigniew out of the country a few years earlier — treacherously recalled him from exile and then imprisoned and blinded him. This bloody deed met with a negative reaction in public opinion, and Bolesław was forced to undergo a humiliating public penance.³

¹ Gallus, *Cronicae*; and *GPP*.

² The dedicatory letter of Book I, where the author mentions the names of all the Polish bishops, allows us to date the time of the chronicle's composition to the years 1112–18. The anonymous chronicler himself also emphasizes the role played in the chronicle's creation by Bolesław Wrymouth's chancellor Michael. He calls him 'cooperatori suo [...] cepitque laboris opfici' ('his helper [...] the maker of the task embarked upon'); Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. Ep., p. 1; *GPP*, pp. 2–3; see e.g. Marian Plezia, *Kronika Galla na tle historiografii XII wieku*, Rozprawy Wydziału Historyczno-Filozoficznego, 2nd ser., vol. II, 47 (Cracow: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1947), p. 136 and pp. 182–95; and Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der 'nationes': Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter*, Münsterische Historische Forschungen, 8 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995), pp. 491–99.

³ See generally Karol Maleczyński, *Bolesław III Krzywousty* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1975), pp. 70–78.

In these circumstances, actions were undertaken at the Duke's court aiming at restoring Bolesław's undermined authority and legitimizing his power; Gallus Anonymus's *Chronicle* was one of these actions.⁴ It created an image of Bolesław as the sole rightful ruler summoned by God to exercise monarchical governance and presented him as an heir to a dynasty that had reigned over Poland since time immemorial. These current political relations and the needs of the ducal court defined to a large extent the nature of Gallus's work and influenced his account on the history of Poland. One should not, however, treat the *Chronicle* of Gallus exclusively as a product of pure propaganda aimed at relieving tensions caused by dynastic conflict, since it seems that Gallus's vision of the past of Poland and of the dynasty ruling over it was shared by a considerable number of political elites. The *Chronicle* reflected their own perception of themselves and determined their identity.⁵

Anonymus and his Chronicle

Whereas we may determine more or less precisely the time and circumstances of the *Chronicle's* composition, we are not able to say much about its anonymous author, commonly referred to as Gallus, consistent with a tradition entrenched in the sixteenth century.⁶ We may only say with absolute certainty that he was not a Pole, and that he was probably a monk.⁷ We may only guess where he came from

⁴ See e.g. Jan Adamus, *O monarchii Gallowej* (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie, 1952); Thomas N. Bisson, 'On not Eating Polish Bread in Vain: Resonance and Conjuncture in the Deeds of the Princes of Poland', *Viator*, 29 (1998), 275–89; and Zbigniew Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics: Writing the History of a Dynastic Conflict in Medieval Poland* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

⁵ Cf. recently Przemysław Wiszewski, *'Domus Bolesłai': W poszukiwaniu tradycji dynastycznej Piastów (do około 1138 roku)* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2008).

⁶ He was first identified by this name by the sixteenth-century Polish historian Martin Kromer, who placed on one of the manuscripts of the chronicle the following short annotation: 'Gallus hanc historiam scripsit, monachus, opinor, aliquis, ut ex proemiis conicere licet, qui Boleslai tercii tempore vixit' ('Gallus wrote this history, probably a monk, who lived in days of Bolesław III, as one may conclude from the forewords'). See Gallus, *Cronicae*, p. 1; *GPP*, p. xxv; see also Pierre David, *Les Sources de l'histoire de Pologne à l'époque des Piasts, 963–1386* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1934), p. 49; and Plezia, *Kronika Galla*, p. 13.

⁷ In his dedicatory letter addressed to the Polish clergy at the beginning of Book III, the chronicler describes himself as 'exul apud vos et peregrinus' ('an exile and a sojourner among you') and expresses the hope that, after the completion of his work, he will be able to return 'ad locum

and when he came to Poland. A hypothesis linking our anonymous author with Provence, and especially with the monastery of St Gilles, seems to be the most accepted one.⁸ However, there are also arguments in favour of his possible connections with Flanders,⁹ while other arguments seem in turn to point to his possible connections with Venice.¹⁰ Based on stylistic similarities and on the approach to structuring the narration, attempts have been made recently to attribute to Gallus — in addition to the *Chronicle* — authorship of the anonymous *translatio* of St Nicholas, compiled at the monastery of St Nicholas on the Lido, and to connect the author of both texts with Dalmatia, and especially with Zadar.¹¹ On the other hand, in view of the resemblance between the rhythmical prose used by Gallus and the contemporary writing style used in central France in the region of Tours and Orléans, it is possible that he was educated there.¹² Given his knowledge of Hungarian affairs and presumable knowledge of contemporary Hungarian sources, it is quite possible that he also spent some time in Hungary, probably at the Benedictine monastery in Somogyvár, a daughter house of St Gilles Abbey.¹³ However, all these varied attempts to identify the author and to specify the milieu from which he may have originated have not yet led to conclusive findings and remain more or less strongly grounded hypotheses.¹⁴

mee professionis' ('to the place of my profession'); Gallus, *Cronicae*, III. Ep., p. 120; *GPP*, pp. 210–11.

⁸ David, *Les Sources*, p. 47; and Plezia, *Kronika Galla*, p. 180.

⁹ Karol Maleczyński, 'Wstęp', in Gallus, *Cronicae*, p. lxxxix; see also Johannes Fried, 'Gnesen – Aachen – Rom. Otto III. und der Kult des hl. Adalbert: Beobachtungen zum älteren Adalberts-leben', in *Polen und Deutschland: Die Berliner Tagung über den 'Akt von Gnesen'*, ed. by Michael Borgolte (Berlin: Akademie, 2002), pp. 235–80 (pp. 267–69).

¹⁰ Danuta Borawska, 'Gallus Anonim czy Italus Anonim', *Przegląd Historyczny*, 56 (1965), 111–19.

¹¹ Tomasz Jasiński, *O pochodzeniu Galla Anonima* (Cracow: Avalon, 2008).

¹² Marian Plezia, 'Nowe studia nad Gallem Anonimem', in *Mente et litteris: O kulturze i społeczeństwie wieków średnich*, ed. by Helena Chłopocka (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1984), pp. 111–20.

¹³ Plezia, *Kronika Galla*, pp. 149–78; and Dániel Bagi, *Królowie węgierscy w Kronice Galla Anonima* (Cracow: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2008).

¹⁴ Recently another attempt has been made at determining Gallus's origin and identifying him with Bishop Otto of Bamberg; see Johannes Fried, 'Kam der Gallus Anonymus aus Bamberg?', *Deutsches Archiv*, 65 (2009), 497–545.

Likewise, the time and circumstances of Gallus's arrival in Poland are a matter of conjecture. He most likely came to Poland to write his *Chronicle* in Bolesław Wrymouth's entourage during the Duke's return from his penitential pilgrimage to Hungary, made after his bloody crackdown on Zbigniew. However, of course, one cannot exclude the possibility of Gallus's earlier arrival to Poland.¹⁵

The political aim of the *Chronicle* determined to a great extent the genre and the composition of Gallus's work. The chronicle was written, as its author put it, 'gratia cuiusdam gloriosissimi ducis ac victoriosissimi nomine Boleszlai' ('in honour of one of the most glorious and victorious of dukes, by name Bolesław').¹⁶ Further on, the chronicler once again explained the purpose of his work, this time in a more detailed manner: 'Est autem intencio nostra de Polonia et duce principaliter Boleslao describere eiusque gratia quedam gesta predecessorum digna memoria recitare' ('Our intention is to tell of Poland and in particular of Duke Bolesław, and for his sake to recount some of the deeds of his forebears that are worthy of record').¹⁷ The chronicle's entire arrangement, as well as its mode of presentation and selection of the described events, was subordinate to this basic aim: demonstrating the greatness and glory of Bolesław Wrymouth and his predecessors.¹⁸

In Book I, Gallus presents the history of the ducal dynasty — the Piasts — from the moment of their seizing power over Poland till the birth of Bolesław Wrymouth and describes the glorious deeds of his hero's ancestors. In his presentation, Poland's history becomes inextricably linked to the histories of the members of the princely dynasty, and the Piast dukes are portrayed as the sole rightful rulers — the true 'natural lords' summoned by God to wield power over Poland, whose rule guarantees the well-being of Poland and the Poles. In the subsequent two books, the chronicler focuses his attention on presenting the magnificent deeds of Bolesław Wrymouth, who since his earliest years demonstrated exceptional virtues and who scored major victories against numerous enemies, pagan and Christian alike. In this way, Gallus expressly notes that power over Poland should justly fall to Bolesław as the real heir to the great Piast rulers described in Book I — primarily his namesakes Bolesław I the Brave (992–1025) and Bolesław II the Bold (1058–79) — and not to his brother Zbigniew.

¹⁵ David, *Les Sources*, p. 47; and Plezia, *Kronika Galla*, p. 180.

¹⁶ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I, Prohemium, p. 6; *GPP*, pp. 10–11.

¹⁷ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I, Prohemium, p. 9; *GPP*, pp. 14–15.

¹⁸ Cf. Plezia, *Kronika Galla*, pp. 62–76.

In this respect, the *Chronicle* of Gallus is similar to other narratives composed at the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Western Europe devoted to propagating the glory of princely dynasties. Similarly to Gallus's chronicle, many of them were composed in response to dynastic crises threatening the stability of princely dominions and served to overcome such crises and to legitimize dynastic power. Like Gallus, the authors of these narratives focused on the deeds of their heroes and presented them as the builders and defenders of principalities, fighting against many enemies, both pagan and Christian. In their renditions the great princely deeds were represented as the foundation of legitimate rulership, proving the rights of the princes to wield a real, monarchical power.¹⁹ It does not, however, mean that we can treat the chronicle of Gallus — written by an author whose most likely place of origin was Western Europe — as a work that was connected exclusively with Western literary tradition and its typical narrative patterns. Gallus's work was written with the participation of Bolesław Wrymouth's most intimate milieu and was composed with Polish recipients in mind. Therefore, his *Deeds of the Princes of the Poles*, though strongly rooted in the Western tradition of the princely *gesta*, also to a great extent referred to the perceptions of their Polish recipients and presented their vision of legitimate ducal power.

A Chosen Duke

In his narration about the glorious deeds of Bolesław Wrymouth, Gallus devoted much attention to events that took place in 1109 during the siege of the Pomeranian stronghold of Nakło by Bolesław's troops. On St Lawrence's Day, a forty-thousand-strong Pomeranian army — which had arrived to the relief of Nakło — broke the truce that had been concluded earlier and unexpectedly attacked Bolesław's troops, counting less than a thousand knights. In the dogged fight, Bolesław's knights defeated the Pomeranians, with 27,000 Pomeranian warriors falling on the battlefield and the remaining having to find a way to escape and be rescued. While describing the battle of Nakło, Gallus has no doubt that Bolesław, in spite of his extraordinary bravery and exceptional military skills, could not have

¹⁹ Thomas N. Bisson, 'Princely Nobility in an Age of Ambition (c. 1050–1150)', in *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe: Concepts, Origins, Transformations*, ed. by Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), pp. 101–13; see also Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 183–91.

won such a wonderful victory himself; it became possible only thanks to the support of God. God did not let the pagan Pomeranians triumph over Christians. He came to his believers' rescue and brought defeat upon their enemies: the Pomeranians died, as the chronicler put it, 'non humana, sed manu divina' ('at God's hand not the hands of men').²⁰

The idea of God's care of Bolesław and His support of the Polish ruler and via Bolesław of the entire Polish community is developed by Gallus Anonymus more widely in the description of the invasion of Poland by Emperor Henry V. In this case, as the chronicler attempts to prove, God once again did not leave Bolesław on his own but instead came to the rescue and caused his enemies to be defeated, even though this time Bolesław had to fight not against pagans, but against the Christian emperor.

Bolesław was informed of Henry's attack soon after the above-mentioned victory over the Pomeranians. Without heeding his knights' exhaustion, the Duke immediately went back to his country in order to square up to the new opponent. Having a small army at his disposal, Bolesław decided not to engage Henry in battle but instead started harassing the Emperor's troops. Soon panic started spreading in the ranks of the imperial army constantly being attacked by Bolesław, and some German knights appreciating the bravery and courage of the Polish ruler even started singing a song to his glory, in which they admitted that 'Deus est cum eo faciens victoriam' ('God is on his side and gives to him victory'). Hearing this, some men of worth and prudence — as Gallus puts it — said:

Nisi Deus hunc hominem adiuvaret, numquam tantam de paganis victoriam ei daret, neque nobis ita viriliter contra staret. Et ni Deus eum ita potencialiter exaltaret, numquam eum noster populus sic laudaret.

[If God were not with this man, he would never grant him so great a victory over the pagans, nor would he stand against us so stoutly. If God did not exalt him so powerfully, our people would never sing his praises like this.]

In the end, even the Emperor himself recognized that he was unable to resist divine will and would not manage to overcome a ruler supported by God. After an unsuccessful attempt at inducing Bolesław to conclude a peace treaty, the defeated Henry had to return home in disgrace, carrying back the corpses of his knights instead of tribute from Bolesław. In this way — as Gallus sums up his report on

²⁰ Gallus, *Cronicae*, III. 1, pp. 126–29; *GPP*, pp. 220–27.

Henry's expedition — a 'iustus iudex' ('righteous judge') punished the pride of the Emperor and defended Poland's ancient freedom.²¹

The chronicle of Gallus contains information about the support given to Bolesław Wrymouth's rulership by God in other ways besides the above-described events of 1109. In Gallus's presentation, the bonds between God and Bolesław did not come down to an act of one-time divine intervention on behalf of the Duke fighting for a good cause. They had a much more complex character and resulted — as the chronicler seems to suggest — from the special plans of divine Providence towards the Polish duke, and consequently also towards the community subject to his authority.²²

Even the birth of the hero of Gallus's chronicle happened as the result of Providence, for Bolesław's birth was a true gift of God granted not only to his parents — who had been fruitlessly waiting for a son for many years — but also to all their subjects. Earlier, God granted John the Baptist to Zachary and gave a son to Abraham and Sarah; now He decided likewise to give to the Polish duke Władysław a son for whom He had special plans. Bolesław, who was born thanks to God, 'Deum timeret, sanctam ecclesiam exaltaret, iustitiam exerceret, ad honorem Dei et salutem populi regnum Polonie detineret' ('should fear God, exalt Holy Church, exercise justice, and, above all, hold the kingdom of Poland to the honor of God and the salvation of people').²³

The exceptional character of the ties linking God with Bolesław found a particularly visible expression during events accompanying the young Duke's knight-ing. As Gallus presents it, Bolesław's father, Duke Władysław 'videns quia puer etate florebat, gestisque militaribus prepollebat [...] eum accingi gladio [...] disposuit' ('seeing that the boy was in the prime of his life and had a special gift for soldiering [...] decided that he should be girded with the sword').²⁴ When the celebration of Bolesław's knight-ing had been completed, pagan Cumans invaded Poland. Having plundered the country and taken rich spoils, they finally decided to retreat, but suddenly

Deus, christianorum conservator, sueque vigilie vindicator, paucorum fidelium audaciam in multorum perniciem paganorum suscitavit, quibus irruentibus dominice diei in Gloria sue patencie brachio triumphavit.

²¹ Gallus, *Cronicae*, III. 3–15, pp. 130–42; *GPP*, pp. 228–47.

²² See e.g. Roman Michałowski, 'Restauratio Poloniae dans l'idéologie dynastique de Gallus Anonymus', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 52 (1985), 5–43 (pp. 25–30).

²³ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 30, p. 57; *GPP*, pp. 104–05.

²⁴ Gallus, *Cronicae*, II. 18, p. 86; *GPP*, pp. 152–53.

[God, protector of Christians and avenger of His vigil, roused the courage of a few of the faithful to the destruction of the vast number of pagans, and triumphed as they fell upon them in the glory of the Lord's day and in might of His arm.]

The Cumans, crushed as the result of divine intervention, fell into such terror that 'regnante Boleslauo videre Poloniam non sunt ausi' ('they did not dare to set eyes to Poland again during Bolesław's reign').²⁵ The meaning of the events that took place during the Cuman invasion was explained in the opening sentence of Gallus's report on the victory over pagans, won thanks to divine support: 'Boleslauo itaque milite noviter constituto, in Plaucis Deus revelavit, quanta per eum operari debeat in futuro' ('So Bolesław had just been made a knight when God revealed in the case of the Cumans what great exploits He was to perform through him in the future').²⁶ A miracle that God performed in defeating the Cumans occurred — as the chronicler convinces us — due to Bolesław. It was him that God chose, and He connected to the chosen one the fulfilment of His plans. Only on Bolesław's account did God decide to directly interfere with history and to reveal His will. Further on in his narrative, Gallus even more firmly highlights his conviction regarding the exceptional role that the Polish ruler was to play in God's plans. According to our chronicler, during Bolesław's knighting — which in Gallus's presentation plays the role of the inaugural ritual bestowing upon the princeling the right to rule²⁷ — one of its participants was supposed to turn to Bolesław's father with the following speech:

Domine dux [...] Wladislaue, pius Deus hodie regnum Polonie visitavit, tuamque senectutem et infirmitatem totamque patriam per hunc hodie factum militem exaltavit. Beata mater, que talem puerum educavit. Usque modo Polonia fuit ab hostibus conculcata, sed per istum puerulum erit ut antiquitus restaurata.

[My lord Duke Władysław, [...] today the good Lord has visited the kingdom of Poland, and has exalted your old age and your infirmity and our whole country by his knighting today. Blessed is the mother who raised such a son. Until now Poland was trodden down by her enemies, but this young lad will restore her as she was in times of old.]²⁸

The words of this anonymous knight — told, as the chronicler emphasizes, with the spirit of prophecy — contained a clear message. Distinct allusions to the text

²⁵ Gallus, *Cronicae*, II. 19, pp. 86–87; *GPP*, pp. 154–55.

²⁶ Gallus, *Cronicae*, II. 19, pp. 86–87; *GPP*, pp. 154–55.

²⁷ See Zbigniew Dalewski, 'The Knighting of Polish Dukes in the Early Middle Ages', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 80 (1999), 15–43 (pp. 25–28).

²⁸ Gallus, *Cronicae*, II. 20, p. 87; *GPP*, pp. 154–55.

of the Gospels included within them (*Benedictus* (Luke 1. 68–79) and *Magnificat* (Luke 1. 46–55)) brought to mind explicit associations for the relationship between Bolesław and God. In Gallus's rendition, Bolesław seems almost to manifest the personality of the Son of God.²⁹ With Bolesław's birth and his knightly, divine grace surrounding the chosen ruler also fell on Poland and its people, enabling them to participate in the glory attached to Bolesław and guaranteeing them God's help and care. A Poland ruled by a duke chosen by God became a chosen land beloved by God and supported by Him, the land with which He associated His plans in an exceptional way.

As Gallus Anonymus notes, during the reign of Bolesław Poland was destined first of all to disseminate Christianity among the neighbouring pagan peoples; above all the Pomeranians, but also the Prussians and even the Cumans. The Poles were to turn them back from a path leading towards eternal damnation and to divert them towards salvation. In fragments of the chronicle devoted to Bolesław's fights against the pagan people, Gallus strongly stresses the religious aspect of this struggle. Of course, Bolesław's expeditions against Pomerania brought the Duke and his warriors glory and rich spoils; but they also, if not above all, contributed to the expansion of the borders of the Christian world. Describing the Duke's expedition against the Pomeranian castle of Czarńków, the chronicler points out that Bolesław not only 'suo dominio mancipavit' ('subjected it to his lordship') but also 'ad fidem multos ab infidelitate revocavit, ipsumque dominum castelli de fonte baptismatis elevavit' ('turned many from paganism to the faith and raised the lord of the castle himself from the baptismal font').³⁰

In the description of the fights against the Pomeranians, Prussians, or Cumans, Gallus constantly appeals to the dichotomy of Christians and pagans or Christians and barbarians — identifying the knights of Bolesław, the Poles, with the Christian people confronted by the pagan barbarians.³¹ In the context of the struggle against the pagans, Christianity constitutes — according to Gallus — a basic indicator of the group identity of the Poles; it grants a sacred dimension to the battles fought by them and places them within the framework of the history of salvation. God chose Bolesław, and through him He also chose his country (Poland) and his subjects (the Poles) so that Christianity would reach peoples opposed to accepting the real faith and who followed the errors of paganism. That is why He supported

²⁹ Michałowski, '*Restauratio Poloniae*', pp. 28–30.

³⁰ Gallus, *Cronicae*, II. 44, p. 114; *GPP*, pp. 200–01.

³¹ See e.g. Gallus, *Cronicae*, III. 1, pp. 127–29; *GPP*, pp. 220–25.

Bolesław and his knights in this struggle and, according to the announcement made during Bolesław's knighting, directly intervened many times on the battlefield in bringing defeats upon their enemies.

Poland was surrounded — as Gallus wrote in the 'geographical' introduction to his *Chronicle* — not only by pagan people, but also by numerous Christian nations.³² This community of faith, however, did not guarantee friendship and peace. Poland was invaded by its Christian neighbours many times, and they — especially the Czechs — sometimes attacked Poland in no less a treacherous way than pagans did. Yet Bolesław, and together with him the Poles, could count on God's help during these fights as well. Admittedly, in numerous battles fought by Bolesław (mainly against the Czechs) God did not, according to Gallus, intervene directly on behalf of the Polish duke and his knights, as was the case when they were fighting against pagans. However, the victories won by Bolesław were also indicative enough of God's support. There were no doubts that God stood on the side of the Polish duke and constantly helped him during his military undertakings.³³ Only in the above-mentioned account about Henry V's invasion did Gallus decide to point directly to God's support of Bolesław in the fight against the Emperor. It is possible to think that in reminding readers of the exceptional character of the ties linking the Polish duke and God in the context of the struggle against the Christian emperor, the chronicler wanted to highlight more clearly his ideas regarding the exceptional role of Bolesław and the chosen nature of the community subjected to his power. God did not leave Bolesław and his people alone even during their struggle against the Emperor, but instead came to their rescue and brought defeat upon their enemy. It is therefore not strange that a few years later, in order to expiate the crime committed against his half-brother Zbigniew, Bolesław,

non ducatum, sed regnum magnificum gubernaret ac de diversis et christianorum et paganorum nationibus hostium dubitaret, semet ipsum regnumque suum servandum divine potentie commendavit et iter peregrinationis [...] summa devotione consumavit.

[although he ruled not a duchy but a magnificent kingdom and had to fear from diverse enemy nations, Christian and pagan alike, commended himself and his realm to the care of God's power and with deepest devotion undertook a journey of pilgrimage.]³⁴

³² Gallus, *Cronicae*, I, Prohemium, pp. 6–9; *GPP*, pp. 12–15.

³³ See e.g. Norbert Kersken, 'God and the Saints in Medieval Polish Historiography', in *Making of Christian Myths*, pp. 153–94 (pp. 160–63).

³⁴ Gallus, *Cronicae*, III. 25, p. 158; *GPP*, pp. 276–77.

Bolesław knew that God would not permit the kingdom, left in his care, to meet with misfortune; God — as Gallus proves — had made a covenant with the dynasty governing Poland and its subjects and had promised always to take care of them.

In order to understand the significance of God's miraculous interventions on Bolesław Wrymouth's behalf, it is necessary to put them into the wider context of Gallus's narrative about the history of Poland and its rulers. In the chronicler's rendition, Bolesław Wrymouth's reign — although very special because of the Duke's exceptional virtues — was only the culmination of a long period of successful rule by consecutive Piast rulers who had also experienced acts of divine intervention.³⁵ Of course, there is no doubt that God supported Bolesław Wrymouth in a special way; God provided care for him not only because He had taken a special liking to Bolesław, but above all this support resulted from the plans that the Lord had for the whole dynasty ruling in Poland. In this context, it is worth giving special attention to a dynastic legend told by our chronicler describing the events that accompanied the seizing of power over Poland by the Piast kin.

A Chosen Dynasty

From Gallus's account we learn that two mysterious wanderers arrived at the city of Gniezno, where Duke Popiel then ruled. Driven away from the gates by inhabitants of the city, they found shelter in a suburb, in a cottage of the Duke's poor ploughman Piast and his wife Rzepka, and were invited to stay there. The strangers

at [...] pauperis invitationi gratanter inclinantes et hospitalitalis tugurium subeuntes: 'bene, inquiunt, nos advenisse gaudeatis et in nostro adventu bonorum copiam et de sobole honorem et gloriam habeatis'.

[accepted the poor man's invitation with pleasure and, as they entered the hut, they said: 'May you truly be glad we have come, and may our arrival bring you abundance of good things, and honor and glory in your offspring!']

As it turned out, the wishes given by the wanderers would come true in an unexpected way. Despite his poverty, Piast not only let the strangers in, but also put at their disposal the modest supplies of food he had gathered for the celebration of his son's hair-cutting. To the amazement of everyone, the food and drink multiplied in abundance, so the poor ploughman could invite to the banquet not only the strangers and his friends and neighbours, but also the Duke himself and

³⁵ Cf. Michałowski, '*Restauratio Poloniae*', pp. 35–43.

his retinue. 'Visis igitur Patz et Rzepka miraculis que fiebant, aliquid magni presagii de puero sentiebant' ('When Piast and Rzepka saw these miraculous things happening, they realized that something of great significance was being foretold for the boy'). In the end, 'hospites illi puerum totonderunt, eique Semouith vocabulum ex presagio futurorum indiderunt' ('the two guests cut the boy's hair, and in pre-sage of the future they gave him the name Siemowit'). Further on, Gallus describes the events accompanying the collapse of the rule of Popiel — who was eaten by mice — and the acquisition of the ducal throne by Siemowit, with whom the reign of the Piast dynasty over Poland began.³⁶

In the case of the Piast dynastic legend written down by Gallus, we deal, without doubt, with a compound story, drawing on different traditions.³⁷ Without discussing the issue of its origins, it is worth observing that in our chronicler's account one can discern a clear attempt at placing the story about the beginnings of the Piasts within the framework of Christian tradition.³⁸ It is not only a matter of Gallus using biblical themes in a more or less direct way;³⁹ of more importance is the great significance the chronicler attached to the direct participation of God in events leading to the seizing of power by the first, still pagan, representative of the Piast dynasty. The mysterious strangers arrived in Gniezno — as Gallus emphasizes — 'ex occulto Dei consilio' ('by God's secret plan').⁴⁰ The multiplication of the food in Piast's cottage similarly resulted from 'Dei magnalia' ('the marvelous works of God') and 'divinis beneficiis' ('divine goodness').⁴¹ An award that Piast and his son were to receive according to the announcement of the strangers also resulted from the will of God, who 'temporaliter pauperum humilitatem aliquo- ciens exaltat et hospitalem etiam gentilium remunerare non recusat' ('exalts the poor and humble in this world and does not disdain to reward even pagans for

³⁶ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 1–3, pp. 9–13; *GPP*, pp. 16–25.

³⁷ See Jacek Banaszkiewicz, *Podanie o Piaście i Popielu: Studium nad wczesnośredniowiecznymi tradycjami dynastycznymi* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1986); and Czesław Deptuła, *Galla Anonima mit genezy Polski: Studium z historiozofii i hermeneutyki symboli dziejopisarstwa średniowiecznego* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1990).

³⁸ Cf. Michałowski, 'Restauratio Poloniae', pp. 11–14.

³⁹ Deptuła, *Galla Anonima*, pp. 219–64; see also Wiszewski, 'Domus Bolesłai', pp. 174–89.

⁴⁰ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 1, p. 9; *GPP*, pp. 16–17.

⁴¹ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 2, pp. 10–11; *GPP*, pp. 20–21.

their hospitality').⁴² Gallus seems to suggest that together with the arrival of the mysterious strangers, God became involved in the life of the community of the Poles. Popiel and the dwellers of Gniezno did not grasp the meaning of the miracle and the divine intervention taking place before their eyes, and did not accept the strangers who arrived by God's plan. By contrast, Piast answered God's summons and invited His envoys to stay in his house. Christianity reached Poland, admittedly, much later, and Piast and his family remained pagans. However, as Gallus seems to suggest, during the celebration of young Siemowit's hair-cutting — with the abundance of God's miracles — not only did the Piasts get in touch with God for the first time, but also the humility and hospitality of the poor ploughman enabled them to win God's favour and consequently to seize power.⁴³ In regard to the Lord's participation in handing power over to the Piast kin, Gallus had no doubt: 'rex regum et dux ducum eum Polonie ducem [...] ordinavit et de regno Pumpil cum sobole radicitus exstirpavit' ('King of Kings and Duke of Dukes [...] made him [Siemowit] duke of Poland, and He rid the kingdom once and for all of Popiel and all his progeny').⁴⁴

In Gallus's narrative, however, the miraculous events that took place in Piast's cottage led not only to the change of the dynasty ruling Poland, to the divine deposition of Popiel, and to the appointment of Piast's offspring to the throne; as the chronicler seems to suggest, the history of Poland and the Poles in fact began with this act of divine intervention, which made Siemowit's seizure of ducal power possible. The narrator's point is not only that Siemowit 'suis principatus fines ulterius quam aliquis antea dilitavit' ('extended the boundaries of the realm farther than anyone previously')⁴⁵ and gave the Duchy of Poland its final territorial shape; at the same time, by handing the ducal power over to Siemowit and then to the following Piast rulers, the Lord entrusted them with the task of leading the community of the Poles into the history of salvation. In Gallus's presentation, the process of placing Poland via the Piast rulers within the framework of *christianitas* began already with the seizure of power by Siemowit. During the reign of the first

⁴² Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 2, pp. 10–11; *GPP*, pp. 20–21.

⁴³ Banaszekiewicz, *Podanie o Piaście*, pp. 149–55; and Deptuła, *Galla Anonima*, pp. 219–25.

⁴⁴ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 3, p. 12; *GPP*, pp. 22–23. See Brygida Kürbis, 'Sacrum and Profanum in Polish Medieval Historiography: Views on Social Order', *Questiones Medii Aevi*, 2 (1981), 19–34; and Zbigniew Dalewski, 'Vivat princeps in aeternum: Sacrality of Ducal Power in Poland in the Earlier Middle Ages', in *Monotheistic Kingship: The Medieval Variants*, ed. by Aziz Al-Azmeh and János M. Bak (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), pp. 215–30.

⁴⁵ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 3, p. 13; *GPP*, pp. 24–25.

three Piast dukes known to Gallus — Siemowit, his son Leszek, and his grandson Siemomysł — Poland remained, of course, a pagan state. Yet in some way, thanks to a covenant made in Piast's cottage between God and the Piast kin, God's presence could already be felt in Poland in those early times. Gallus juxtaposes in an explicit way the time before the Piasts, which was 'memoriam oblivio vetustatis abolevit et quos error et ydolatria defedavit' ('stained by error and idolatry, lost to memory in the oblivion of ages'), and the time of the Piast rulers 'que fidelis recordatio meminit' ('whose memory has been preserved in faithful record').⁴⁶ The Piasts, though they were still pagans, had special relations with the sacred, and through them their subjects were also able to gain divine favour. In his account, Gallus disposed of the pagan pre-Piast past doomed to oblivion outside of memorable time. The Piasts' Poland was from the very beginning connected to God and chosen by Him.⁴⁷

There is no doubt that the covenant between God and the Piast kin and the entire community of the Poles was later complemented and deepened by the baptism of the fourth Piast ruler, Mieszko I, a son of Duke Siemomysł. Only with Mieszko's baptism could God's plans for the Piast dynasty and Poland be definitively carried out.

In this context, it is worth examining more carefully Gallus's account concerning the miraculous restoration of vision to seven-year-old Mieszko, blind from birth.⁴⁸ In the description of our chronicler, the miracle of Mieszko regaining his eyesight is presented as an announcement of his future conversion and the enlightenment of Poland by a duke enlightened by a divine miracle. For God 'visum prius Meschoni corporalem restituit, et postea spiritalem adhibuit, ut per visibilia ad invisibilia agnitionem penetraret' ('first restored to Mieszko his corporeal vision and then gave him spiritual sight, so that he might pass from visible things to the understanding of invisible ones'). In this way, 'quia eo credente Polonica gens de morte infidelitatis es exempta' ('when Mieszko came to believe, the people of Poland were saved from the death of unbelief').⁴⁹ Nevertheless, in Gallus's

⁴⁶ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 3, p. 13; *GPP*, pp. 24–25.

⁴⁷ Cf. Deptuła, *Galla Anonima*, pp. 224–25.

⁴⁸ Deptuła, *Galla Anonima*, pp. 319–21; cf. Jacek Banaszkiewicz, 'Podanie bohaterskie o Mieszku I zanotowane w Kronice Galla Anonima (I, 4)', in *Homines et societas: Czasy Piastów i Jagiellonów*, ed. by Tomasz Jasiński and others (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 1997), pp. 35–45; see also Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai*, pp. 193–95.

⁴⁹ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 4, pp. 13–14; *GPP*, pp. 26–29.

rendition, the miraculous regaining of eyesight by Mieszko and his future conversion were linked to other meanings.

Witnesses of the miracle were supposed to explain its meaning in the following way:

Ipsi vero per cecitatem Poloniam sic antea fuisse quasi cecam indicabant, sed de cetero per Meschonem illuminandam et exaltandam super naciones contiguas prophetabant.

[Their explanation was that as he had once been blind, so too Poland had, as it were, been blind before; but in time to come, they prophesied, Poland would be illuminated by Mieszko and exalted over all the neighboring nations.]⁵⁰

The chronicler puts these words into the mouths of pagan advisers to Mieszko's father, Duke Siemomysł, who could not yet fully understand divine intervention taking place before their eyes. However, this does not mean that Gallus distances himself from them; it is quite the opposite. Gallus adds his own comment to the above-mentioned words of Siemomysł's advisers regarding Poland's exaltation over other nations: 'quod et ita se habuit' ('and indeed, this is what came to pass').⁵¹ For, as he adds even further, 'suo tempore et per eum oriens ex alto regnum Polonie visitavit' ('in Mieszko's day and through him the dayspring from on high visited the kingdom of Poland').⁵² To Duke Mieszko, glorious Bolesław the Brave was born; after his father's death he ruled with God's favour, and his virtues gilded the whole of Poland. Bolesław defeated all neighbouring nations, both Christians (the Czechs, Hungarians, Ruthenians, and Saxons) and pagans (the Pomeranians and Prussians, whom he converted to the Christian faith).⁵³

⁵⁰ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 4, p. 14; *GPP*, pp. 26–27.

⁵¹ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 4, p. 14; *GPP*, pp. 26–27.

⁵² Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 6, p. 16; *GPP*, pp. 30–31.

⁵³ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 6, pp. 16–17; *GPP*, pp. 30–33: 'Numquid non ipse Morauiam et Bohemiam subiugavit et in Praga ducalem sedem obtinuit, suisque eam suffraganeis deputavit. Numquid non ipse Vngaros frequenter in certamine superavit, totamque terram eorum usque Danubium suo domino mancipavit. Indomitos vero tanta virtute Saxones edomuit, quod in flumine Sale in medio terre eorum meta ferrea fines Polonie terminavit. Quid igitur est necesse victorias et triumphos de gentibus incredulis nominatim recitasse, quas constat eum quasi sub pedibus conculcasse. Ipse namque Selenciam, Pomoraniam et Prusiam usque adeo vel in perfidia persistentes contrivit, vel conversas in fine solidavit' ('Did not he conquer Moravia and Bohemia and win the seat of the duchy of Prague and appointed his suffragans to it; was it not he who time and again defeated the Hungarians in battle and made himself master of all their lands as far as the Danube? The indomitable Saxons were not a match for his valor; hence in the middle of their country an iron boundary sign in the River Saale marked Poland's boundaries. What need is there then to list by name his

In this way, as Gallus seems to emphasize, the promise made in the cottage of Piast of the future glory of the descendants of the poor ploughman was ultimately fulfilled. The use of the words of the Gospel in Gallus's description of the great achievements of Bolesław the Brave explicitly placed these events in the framework of the history of salvation, and at the same time pointed to their appropriate meaning.⁵⁴ God once again became involved in the history of the dynasty and through this the history of Poland and the Poles — this time permanently. The Lord's new involvement in Poland's history was, however, not simply an announcement of the greatness and glory of the Poles in an eschatological perspective, as in the case of other Christian nations. Gallus clearly shows that according to God's plans, the Poles were supposed to attain greatness and glory already on the earth. According to those plans, the Poles were destined to dominate not only over the pagan people, whom Poles had to convert to Christianity, but also over other Christian nations who had to recognize their superiority.⁵⁵

A Chosen People?

Developing his narration, Gallus sometimes refers to examples from the Old Testament, comparing the Poles and their rulers to the ancient Israelites. As already mentioned above, while writing about Bolesław Wrymouth's miraculous birth, he compared it to the birth of Isaac.⁵⁶ The chronicler again returned to the issue of the resemblance between Bolesław and Isaac when presenting the Duke's elder brother, Zbigniew. Explaining why he gives his attention to the history of Duke Władysław's son born out of wedlock, he stated that also 'in historia principali duo filii Abrahe memorantur' ('in the account of the beginnings two sons of Abraham are spoken of').⁵⁷ In another passage, while mentioning the birth of his hero once again, Gallus referred to another Old Testament analogy. In the rhymed Epilogue

victories and triumphs over heathen nations, nations which, one may say, he trampled under his feet? For when Selencia, Pomorania, and Prussia persisted in their perfidy he crushed them, and when they converted he strengthened them in their faith').

⁵⁴ Deptuła, *Galla Anonima*, pp. 320–23.

⁵⁵ Cf. Alheydis Plassmann, '*Origo gentis*': *Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen* (Berlin: Akademie, 2006), pp. 312–19.

⁵⁶ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 30, p. 57; *GPP*, pp. 104–05.

⁵⁷ Gallus, *Cronicae*, II. 3, p. 67; *GPP*, pp. 122–23.

to Book I, he additionally and more powerfully emphasized the resemblance of the history of Poland and its rulers with the history of the ancient Israelites:

Sic puer ille nascitur,
 Qui Boleslauus dicitur,
 Quem Wladislaus genuit
 Dux, sicut Deus voluit.
 Genitrix Iudith nomine,
 Fatali forsan ominē,
 Iudith salvavit populum
 Per Olofernis iugulum.
 Ista peperit filium,
 Triumphatorem hostium,

[And so is born the longed-for-son,
 His name as Bolesław is known,
 The offspring of Duke Wladislas,
 As God eternal willed for us.
 And Judith was his mother's name
 (A fateful sign?), as hers the same
 Who Israel's salvation wrought
 By cutting Holofernes' throat.
 A mighty son our Judith bore
 Who conquered all our foes in war.]⁵⁸

In this way the chronicler seems to suggest that Duke Bolesław is supposed to resume the work of the biblical Judith. Whereas she saved Israel by killing Holofernes, he is now to crush the new enemies and to lead his people — a New Israel? — to salvation.

Gallus returns twice more to the issue of the resemblance between Bolesław Wrymouth and the Old Testament heroes and between the Poles and the ancient Israelites. Describing the struggle of the Duke with the Pomeranians and Czechs, the chronicler remarks that Bolesław 'sicut Machabeorum imitator, diviso exercitū et patrie defensor extitit et iniurie vindicator' ('imitating the Maccabees, he divided his host so as to be able to defend his country and avenge his injury') in order to face up to both enemies at the same time.⁵⁹ Gallus emphasizes specific parallelism in the fates of Poland and Israel even more clearly in his description of the invasion of the Pomeranians of Mazovia. Using the Old Testament analogy, he refers this time not to Bolesław Wrymouth's deeds but to deeds of the entire

⁵⁸ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I, Ep., pp. 5–6; *GPP*, pp. 8–11.

⁵⁹ Gallus, *Cronicae*, II, 34, p. 103; *GPP*, pp. 180–81.

community subjected to the Duke's rule. As Gallus presents these events, *comes Magnus*, who was then ruling Mazovia, set off with a small army against the Pomeranians plundering the province:

ubi Deus suam omnipotenciam revelavit; namque de paganis ibi plus quam sexcentos aiunt interisse, predamque totam illis et captivos Mazouienses abstulisse; residues quoque vel capi non est dubium, vel fugisse. Quippe Symon, illius regionis presul, oves suas lupinis morsibus lacerates luctuosis vocibus cum suis clericis infulis indutus sacerdotalibus sequebatur et, quod armis sibi materialibus non licebat, hoc armis perficere spiritalibus et orationibus satagebat. Et sicut antiquitus filii Israel Amalechitas orationibus Moysi devicerunt, ita nunc Mazouienses de Pomoranis victoriam, sui pontificis adiuti precibus, habuerunt.

[Here God revealed His omnipotence, for in the battle they say that more than six hundred pagans lost their lives, and the Mazovians seized all their plunder and the captives — either were captured or fled. For Simon, the bishop of those parts, donned his priestly vestments and in company with his clerics followed his sheep who had been torn by the teeth of the wolves, mourning loudly, and strove to accomplish with spiritual arms and prayers what he was not permitted to do with material weapons. And as in ancient days the sons of Israel smote the Amalekites through the prayers of Moses, so now the Mazovians won victory over the Pomeranians with the help of their bishop's prayers.]⁶⁰

Do all these examples prove that Gallus, in intertwining the history of ancient Israel with the history of Poland, perceived the latter as a New Israel and intended to present the Poles as the Chosen People in a biblical sense? Indeed, the idea of divine election was attractive for the peoples who had accepted Christianity relatively late and been located in the peripheries of the Christian world. The notion of God's elect enabled them to incorporate their histories into the history of salvation and legitimized on a religious level their convictions about their exceptional and special nature.⁶¹ In the early Middle Ages among some peoples, especially the Franks, the concept of divine election served to create and strengthen a notion of group identity, defined the character of relations with the outer world and God, and explained their role in history.⁶² In the epoch of the Crusades in the twelfth century, the idea of divine election was resumed in a new changed form, leading to the recognition of all the crusaders as elect and to the identification of Christianity

⁶⁰ Gallus, *Cronicae*, II, 49, pp. 118–19; *GPP*, pp. 206–09.

⁶¹ See generally Mary Garrison, 'Divine Election for Nations: A Difficult Rhetoric for Medieval Scholars?', in *Making of Christian Myths*, pp. 275–314.

⁶² Cf. Mary Garrison, 'The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an Identity from Pippin to Charlemagne', in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 114–61.

with Israel.⁶³ Echoes of the crusading ideas also seem to be heard clearly in Gallus's work.⁶⁴ In these circumstances, it would seem natural that our chronicler would transfer the idea of divine election onto the Poles — who also fought, as the crusaders did, in the defense of Christianity against the pagans, Pomeranians, Cumans, and Prussians — and that he would identify them with the Chosen People.⁶⁵

Yet the matter is much more complex, and it is hard to settle it only on the basis of references to the Old Testament included in the *Chronicle*. They need not have carried absolutely direct associations with the idea of divine election and the concept of a New Israel.⁶⁶ Besides the examples taken from the Old Testament, Gallus also repeatedly refers to examples and comparisons taken from classical authors, and he does not hesitate to use various mythological allusions.⁶⁷ It seems, therefore, that in order to appropriately understand the character of the vision developed by Gallus of the special place of Poland and the Poles in God's plans, it is necessary to take into consideration the specific 'dynastic' nature of his *Chronicle*.

In Gallus's presentation, the fate of Poland and its people intertwined inextricably with the fate of the Piast dynasty. Only after the seizure of power by the first Piast ruler did God become involved in the history of Poland and of the Poles, and only after Duke Mieszko's baptism were the Poles saved from the perdition of paganism.⁶⁸ The link between the Poles and God came true only via the dynasty. God had taken care of the Poles at first as a result of Piast's decision to receive His envoys; and then, as a result of Mieszko's decision to accept Christianity, the path was open before them, leading to salvation and earthly glory. The Piast dynasty was

⁶³ See e.g. Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and Idea of Crusading* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 130–52.

⁶⁴ See Andrzej F. Grabski, 'Polska wobec idei wypraw krzyżowych na przełomie XI i XII wieku: "Duch krzyżowy" Anonima Galla', *Zapiski Historyczne*, 26 (1961), 37–64.

⁶⁵ Cf. Kersken, 'God and the Saints', pp. 170–72.

⁶⁶ Cf. Garrison, 'Divine Election', pp. 283–84. E.g. with regard to comparisons with the Maccabees, see Hagen Keller, '*Machabaeorum pugnae*: Zum Stellenwert eines biblischen Vorbilds in Widukinds Deutung der ottonischen Königsherrschaft', in *Iconologia Sacra: Mythos, Bildkunst und Dichtung in der Religions- und Sozialgeschichte Alteuropas: Festschrift für Karl Hauck zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. by Hagen Keller and Nikolaus Staubach, *Arbeiten zur Frühmittelalterforschung*, 23 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 417–37; and Jean Dunbabin, 'The Maccabees as Exemplars in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley*, ed. by Katherine Walsh and Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp. 31–41; see also Wiszewski, '*Domus Boleslai*', p. 306.

⁶⁷ Cf. Plezia, *Kronika Galla*, pp. 122–34.

⁶⁸ Cf. Plassmann, '*Origo gentis*', p. 299.

a guarantor of the auspiciousness of the country and its inhabitants, resulting from the support God gave to them. It was only out of consideration for the Piast rulers that God provided His care for the Poles and decided to elevate them over other nations. Without the Piasts' mediation the link between the Poles and God breaks away.

Gallus elaborates this thought particularly clearly in the description of tragic events that took place in the 1030s. The driving of Duke Casimir I the Restorer out of the country by the rebels brought a real disaster to Poland and the Poles. Rulers of neighbouring kingdoms started invading Poland and incorporating its land into their own dominions. At the same time, the inhabitants of Poland also started destroying their own country. 'Nam in dominos servi, contra nobiles liberati se ipsos in dominium extulerunt' ('For serfs rose against their masters, and freedman against nobles, seizing power for themselves'). What is more,

a fide catholica deviantes, [...] adversus episcopos et sacerdotes Dei seditionem inceperunt, eorumque quosdam gladio quasi dignos peremerunt, quosdam vero quasi morte dignos viliori lapidibus obruerunt. Ad extremeum autem tam ab extraneis, quam ab indigenis ad tantam Polonia desolationem est redacta, quod ex toto pene divitiis et hominibus est exuta.

[they turned aside from the Catholic faith and rose against their bishops and the priests of God, some they deemed worthy to be put to death by the sword, some by baser death of stoning. In the end foreigners and her own people had between them reduced Poland to such desolation that she was stripped of almost all of her wealth and population.]⁶⁹

Only the return of Casimir, who was again recognized by the Poles as their ruler, changed the situation and enabled the reconstruction of the kingdom. Casimir 'totam Poloniam a Pomoranis et Bohemicis aliisque finitimis gentibus occupatam liberavit, eamque suo dominio mancipavit' ('freed the whole of Poland from the occupation of the Pomeranians, Czechs, and other neighboring peoples and made himself master of it').⁷⁰ According to Gallus, the rejection by the Poles of the Piast duke chosen by God resulted in their defeat both in earthly (Poland began to be ravaged by enemies) and eschatological (renouncing their faith, they were doomed to eternal damnation) terms. God turned His back on the ones who did not remain faithful to His chosen one, and He did not leave the latter alone. In the end, Casimir returned with God's help to his country, and with his return Poland and the Poles regained divine support: the state was rebuilt and its enemies were defeated.

⁶⁹ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 19, pp. 42–43; *GPP*, pp. 78–79.

⁷⁰ Gallus, *Cronicae*, I. 19, p. 44; *GPP*, pp. 80–81.

Thus, in Gallus's narrative, the idea of God's elect acquires a peculiar dynastic character. God chose the Piasts and through them decided to accomplish great deeds. As a result, the glory of the Lord given to the Piast rulers also partly fell upon their subjects, the Poles. However, the point of reference for God's action was, according to the narrator, not the Poles but the Piast dynasty. The Poles could take part in God's plans only thanks to the covenant made between the Lord and his chosen dynasty, the Piasts, and only as long as they remained loyal to these rulers.

Conclusion

In Gallus's chronicle, we may discern some levels of Christian identities. They are hierarchically ordered and at the same time they permeate each other and impose on themselves. All these identities find a point of reference in the conviction concerning the special character of the bonds linking God with Poland, the Poles, and especially with the Piast dynasty, and regarding God's permanent presence in their history. This conviction determined the character of the vision of the Polish past and present developed in the *Chronicle*. The Poles are Christians, and like all Christians they are the Chosen People; but the Poles' Christianity has a specific nature. The point is not that Poland became a Christian country relatively late and that its Christianity is not yet solidly rooted; in fact, it is just the opposite. In Gallus's rendition, Poland's Christianity is in some way better and deeper than in other Christian countries, and Poland is to play a special role in God's plan. For Poland is surrounded by pagan peoples, and the Poles have to fight against them in defence of the entire Christian community, as well as in order to convert them and to expand the borders of the Christian world. This special role for the Poles with reference to their pagan neighbours defines the nature of their relations with God and their Christian neighbours. Because of their leading role in the spread of Christianity, God has provided special care for the Poles. They are, as Gallus seems to suggest, more chosen than other Christian nations. Whether our chronicler intended to present the Poles as a New Israel is not absolutely clear. To be sure, in his chronicle there are some allusions that may indeed suggest his intent to identify the Poles with the ancient Israelites and to present them as a new Chosen People in a biblical sense. However, it seems that Gallus does not settle this matter definitively and leaves his text open to various interpretations, since Poland and the Poles are not the centre of his attention as much as the Piast dynasty ruling them. Above all, it is with the Piasts that Gallus associates his concept of divine election. As the chronicler convinces us, the Piasts are those whom God decided

to choose and with whom He connected His plans. The Poles can participate in God's plans only through their dukes. This 'dynastic' perspective of Gallus's chronicle also determined to a large extent his attitude towards Poland's pagan past. The connection between God and the Piasts did not begin only with the baptism of Mieszko. Mieszko's baptism only complemented the longer process of forming an alliance between God and the Piasts that had been initiated in pagan times. Therefore, in Gallus's presentation the opposition between the pagan past and the Christian present, typical of Christian narratives, is complemented by the opposition between pre-Piast times and the Piast age. From the very beginning of that age, with the first Piast ruler's appointment to the throne, God became involved in the history of the community subjected to the power of His chosen rulers, and led it to heavenly and earthly glory.

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY IN THE *CHRONICLE OF THE CZECHS* BY COSMAS OF PRAGUE

János M. Bak

In memoriam Dušan Třeštík (1933–2007)

The *Chronicle of the Czechs* is the oldest surviving narrative on the history of Bohemia, covering its mythical origins to the first quarter of the twelfth century. While its genre is not as uniform as that of some other ‘national histories’, it fits well into the age when such histories were written, beginning with the *origo gentis* and becoming more elaborate for the times of their authors (*Zeitgeschichte*).¹ The last lines of the surviving text testify to the death, on 21 October 1125, of Cosmas, canon and dean of the cathedral church of Prague, who seems to have worked on the text until his last days. (The last date mentioned is 20 May 1125, the death of Emperor Henry IV.) Earlier parts of the *Chronicle*, especially the dedications of the first and second books, suggest that he started writing it some years before; thus the date of writing should be something like AD 1119–25.

The *Chronicle* was ‘popular’ in the sense that it was continued by clerics of the same circle for almost another century. Fifteen manuscripts survived, the oldest ones from the turn of the twelfth to the thirteenth century, the youngest from the late sixteenth.² Moreover, Cosmas’s narrative came to be known to a wider

¹ On these, in a comparative framework, see Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der ‘nationes’: Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellung im Mittelalter*, Münstersche Historische Forschung, 8 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995); on Cosmas esp. pp. 573–82.

² On the manuscript tradition, see the Introduction by Bretholz, in Cosmas, *Chronica*, pp. xlv–lxxxv.

audience (or readership) by its being included in the fourteenth-century vernacular history of the Czechs, referred to as the *Dalimil*.³

Author and Work

Cosmas is one of the relatively few authors of his age about whom we know a fair amount from his chronicle itself. As he calls himself an octogenarian in the 1120s, his birth date must have been some time around 1045 — depending on whether at the time of writing he had just entered the eighth decade or was already past eighty. He was born in Prague, probably into a family of some standing at court or in the city. That he was a Czech (or at least of none of the neighbouring nations) is more than obvious from the derogatory remarks he makes about Germans, Poles, Jews, and Hungarians. After some basic education at home, he left for studies relatively late some time after 1074 and spent years in Lüttich/Liège, where he was a pupil of Master Franco, known to have taught there in the 1070s and 1080s. He may have studied elsewhere as well, but returned to his country around 1091 and became a canon of the cathedral chapter of Prague. Married to Božetěcha — whose death he lamented in 1117 — Cosmas had at least one son, Henry. Henry may have achieved some position in society, as a retainer of his is mentioned in the chronicle; that suggests that he was a knight or some other privileged person. Cosmas was consecrated priest in 1099 and became finally dean of the cathedral chapter. A few references to travels indicate that he accompanied his bishops on important trips and that he once represented the chapter in a matter regarding their properties in Moravia.

In the words of Dušan Třeštík (who knew this chronicle better than anyone and should have written this piece had death not taken him away from us):

Cosmas lived a peaceful life with his eyes open in the very centre of political events at Prague castle, where he met the dukes, noblemen, and bishops on a daily basis. This unobtrusive canon saved in his memory all which he saw and heard, upon which he later reflected. He tried to put his knowledge into perspective in order to reveal its meaning. His views on Czech history were primarily a reaction to the dismal conditions in Bohemia after 1100, when incessant struggles of the Přemyslid princes for the throne were utilized by German and Polish rulers in order to interfere in Czech internal affairs [...]. It was precisely his thinking about the dire conditions of the Czech lands that must have moved Cosmas to write a chronicle wherein he would show his contemporaries how glorious and strong the Czech

³ *Staročeská kronika tak řečeného Dalimila*, ed. by J. Daňhelka and others, 2 vols (Prague: Academia, 1988).

people were in the time of their ancestors and what mistakes were to be avoided so that the land can flourish once again.⁴

The three books of the *Chronicle* cover very different time periods. The first starts with the mythical beginnings of the Czech people, wanderers after the Flood, who arrived in a 'promised land of milk and honey' and then obtained their first prince, the plowman Přemysl. It continues the story into historical times, down to AD 1038. The second book covers the reigns of Břetislav I (1034–55) and his sons Spytihněv (1055–61) and King Vratislav II (1061–92). The third is entirely devoted to times that the author witnessed himself, from 1092 to the year of his death. Accordingly, style and format are different as well. The mythical beginnings are narrated in a colourful style, with strong leanings to Old Testament prose, reflecting some kind of oral traditions, at least of the Přemyslid court. Many elements of the story about ancient times beyond the memory of men are variants on common themes of historiography in East and West alike. The earlier historical times are covered unevenly, often only by quite terse annalistic entries, mostly culled from other historians, above all from the *Chronicon* of Regino of Prüm and annals.⁵ Annalistic lines appear later as well, but vanish entirely from the third book, which is the most detailed in reporting the day-to-day conflicts and confrontations, with quite a few political-moralizing comments. While narrating the story of the Czech people Cosmas also wrote a kind of *gesta principum*, describing and characterizing the dukes (and the two kings) of the first centuries of Bohemia (and Moravia); not, however, without a critical attitude towards their reigns. Moreover, the *Chronicle* has a *gesta episcoporum* also embedded in it: all the bishops of Prague up to his own times were discussed in detail, and most of them received nice obituaries from Cosmas.

As a former student of a famous university, Cosmas knew among several other Latin authors his Vergil, Ovid, Sallust, and Statius well (from the original or from university texts or *florilegia*), and as a cleric he was conversant with the Bible and some Christian authors, such as Sedulius Scottus and Boethius. He made extensive use of both kinds of literary models, classical and Judaeo-Christian, in a free manner: sometimes quoting verbatim, sometimes culling a word or two or paraphrasing. A good example of Cosmas's handling of biblical texts is the speech he put into the mouth of the judge and seer Libuše warning the people of the consequences of

⁴ Dušan Třeštík, 'O Kosmovi a jeho kronice', in *Kosmova kronika česká* (Prague: Pasek, 2005), p. 5, trans. by Petra Mutlová. See also Martin Wihoda, 'Kosmas a Vratislav', in *Querite primum regnum Dei: sborník příspěvků k počtům Jany Nechutové* (Brno: Matice moravská, 2006), pp. 367–81.

⁵ See *Quellen zur karolingischen Reichsgeschichte*, ed. by Reinhold Rau, 3 vols, Freiherr vom Stein Gedächtnisausgabe, 5–7 (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1960), III, 179–319.

electing a duke. It is based entirely on the prophet Samuel's admonition to the Israelites when they insisted on having a king over them, but with only very few verbatim quotes.⁶ Some fine hints at biblical passages would have been appreciated by his fellow clerical readers. The head of a treacherously murdered child (about whom there is more below) is being presented on a dish ('caput in disco') just like that of John the Baptist.⁷ A nice 'parallel' to Christ's Passion can be detected in the chapter about the murder of Duke Vratislav in 1100. The good Duke is reported to have foretold his companions at a table (the Last Supper?) his inevitable fate. Then, upon returning from his last hunt he is received by his men coming out 'with lanterns and torches' (verbatim from John 18. 3 on the betrayal of Jesus). The fatally wounded Duke fell like the Angel Lucifer (with no negative implication) from heaven, while his murderer was 'sent by the Devil' and is also styled *minister Satane*.⁸ It is hardly surprising that a summary 'mirror of princes', formulated as the (of course, fictive) deathbed address of Duke Boleslav (d. 999), is elegantly put together from passages of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes from the Old Testament. True, it continues with lines from the *Disticha Catonis* (misunderstood by Cosmas), which he expanded into a warning against the debasing of coinage, surely a reflection on the misuses of his own times.⁹

His Latin is good, occasionally quite elegant and witty, although when he wants to display his familiarity with Graeco-Roman mythology he occasionally gets into deep waters. The *Chronicle* is rich in rhymed and rhythmical prose, and is in a number of places — according to the custom of *prosimetrum* — interspersed with pieces of poetry ten to fifteen lines long. Hexameters one or two lines long abound.¹⁰

Cosmas consciously avoided repeating hagiographical texts, such as the lives of St Wenceslas and St Adalbert (with which he was clearly familiar, occasionally

⁶ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I. 5, pp. 14–15, cf. I Samuel 11–18; nicely analysed in comparative context by Bernhard Töpfer, *Urzustand und Sündenfall in der mittelalterlichen Gesellschafts- und Staatstheorie* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1999), pp. 133–39. See also Lisa Wolverton, *Hastening toward Prague: Power and Society in the Medieval Czech Lands* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 17–18, with note on p. 289.

⁷ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I. 13, cf. Matthew 14. 8.

⁸ Cosmas, *Chronica*, III. 13, p. 173. I am indebted to Pavlína Rychterová for drawing my attention to this feature.

⁹ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I. 33, pp. 57–60.

¹⁰ A detailed analysis of style and form is offered by Bretholz in the MGH edition, pp. xxxvi–xlv.

quoting them verbatim), and 'sent' his readers to them. He argued that it is tedious to read something already told by others, thus implying that his readers were well familiar with the legends of the treacherously murdered Duke and the martyred missionary Bishop. By his time of writing several *vitae* of these saints existed and may have been propagated through liturgy and sermon. Moreover, the early Slavic life of Wenceslas would have been accessible to a wider audience not trained in Latin. Cosmas described the 'national holiday' at the feast day of St Wenceslas: at such an occasion, 'all Czechs' (an expression he used more than once) would have heard recited the deeds and merits of the martyr-duke. He included, however, the story of the five eremitical brethren, murdered by robbers in Poland, with very elaborate and poetic praises of their asceticism. They too would have been known to the faithful, as their earthly remnants — together with those of St Adalbert and his brother, Bishop Gaudentius — had been transferred to Prague from Gniezno after the Czech raid on Poland in 1038/39. Their legends may not have been easily available in other writings; thus Cosmas decided to include them in his narrative.¹¹ Besides, there are several miracles reported in the *Chronicle*, connected partly to the patron saints Wenceslas and Adalbert (some of them not included in the earlier *vitae*), partly to other holy persons. The report about the miraculous apparition of a prisoner liberated by Radim/Gaudentius (who was not formally canonized, though Cosmas implied his sanctity) was, of course, also connected to the relics of that bishop kept in the Prague cathedral.¹²

The moral (including political) code of Cosmas is not different from many authors of his age. Once the 'golden age' of simple life was replaced by greed and power, society tends to become worse as time passes.¹³ (In his case, as mentioned above, an additional age of prosperity under the first dukes appears to have been destroyed by the sins of those of his own age.) A good ruler is a devout Christian, a supporter of churches, but also victorious in wars of conquest or defense against external enemies. (Of course, the latter is seen as a proof of divine approval.) He

¹¹ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I. 38, pp. 68–72. Actually, Cosmas and his contemporaries may not have known Bruno Querfurtensis, *Vita quinque fratrum eremitarum (seu) Vita uel passio Benedicti et Iohannis sociorumque suorum auctore Brunone Querfurtensi*, ed. by Jadwiga Karwasińska, Monumenta Poloniae Historica, 2nd ser., 4, 3 (Warsaw: Państw. Wydaw. Nauk, 1973), the now best-known life, considering that it survived in a single manuscript. Cosmas could have had some other source about their life and death.

¹² Cosmas, *Chronica*, II. 34, pp. 130–31.

¹³ See e.g. Töpfer, *Urzustand*, passim.

takes counsel with his supporters and honours both clergy and leading freemen.¹⁴ A good cleric — most of those presented were bishops of Prague or Olomouc or leaders of his cathedral chapter — is self-effacing, even ascetic, keen to perform deeds of mercy, and keeps his church in good order.

Causae scribendi, or, Cosmas's Concerns

The author himself does not say much about his intentions. In the Preface to Book I, he merely states that

Igitur huius narrationis sumpsi exordium a primis incolis terre Boemorum et perpauca, que didici senum fabulosa relatione, non humane laudis ambitione, sed ne omnino tradantur relata oblivioni, pro posse et nosse pando omnium honorum dilectione.¹⁵

[I have started this account with the first inhabitants of the land of the Czechs, and, to the extent of my ability and knowledge, I relate for the pleasure of all good people the few things I have learned from the fanciful tales of old men, not striving for human praise but to prevent the stories from wholly falling into oblivion.]

The moralizing purpose comes through quite a few times, when Cosmas compares his contemporaries — vainglorious and servile — to the upright and honest ancients. However, to present a glorious past and teach the present generations about models to follow and errors to avoid was a common concern of all medieval historians (and maybe of modern ones as well). Cosmas was no exception.

Modern readers and scholars have many different views about the main concerns of Cosmas. Dušan Třeštík saw Cosmas's aim as above all to present a continuity of the state of the Czech people — and he underlined the people, not only the land or its rulers. He wrote:

The origins, as described by Cosmas, play a key role in Czech history. His statement that the Czechs settled in an empty land meant that they as its first inhabitants were the rightful owners of the country. The election of the first ruler had an equally important meaning whereby the people gave up their freedom and fully submitted to the duke's authority. The election was to attest to the age-long rights of the Přemyslid dynasty to reign over the land while at the same time sanctioning the principle of monarchy: allegedly already Přemysl determined that only one person of his family should reign.

¹⁴ See among others, most recently, Anna M. Kuznetsova, 'Obshchestvennaia mysl' Chekhii epokhi rannego srednevekovia', in *Obshchestvennaia mysl' slavianskikh narodov v epokhu rannego srednevekovia*, ed. by B. Floria (Moscow: Rukopisnye pamiatniki drevnei Rusi, 2009), pp. 265–92.

¹⁵ Cosmas, *Chronica*, Ad Gervasium magistrum prefatio, p. 3.

As long as this rule was observed, so Třeštík continued, there was harmony in the dynasty, peace and prosperity in the land, and Bohemia's standing in the world was strong. The borders of the country expanded into what is now Poland, the German emperor had only formal rights to a set tribute, and the dukes were victorious against all external enemies. In Třeštík's reading, Cosmas wished to present that

the Czech nation was not united only by the knowledge that they had come from a common ancestor (which is something every primitive tribe always and everywhere imagined), but by the fact that they concluded some sort of a 'social contract' with the ruling dynasty. Therefore the Czechs were not only a tribe, but a community of people [...] not connected through 'blood' but through politics. Cicero would call them a *populus* — politically active citizens.¹⁶

In her recent translation, Lisa Wolverton summarized Cosmas's intentions in similar words: 'Politics was what motivated Cosmas to write and politics was what he wrote about. The result is an account of the Czech past grounded in its present, set off from other peoples, meant as an exhortation to contemporaries to set a new political course for the future'.¹⁷

These views can be augmented by underlining the *Chronicle's* main thread of narrative: the sequence of Přemyslid dukes, good and bad ones, and the lament (as mentioned before) over the conflicts within the dynasty.¹⁸ Other scholars emphasized Cosmas's concern for 'repatriating' St Adalbert, the Slavnikid Vojtěch and briefly bishop of Prague, whose remains the Czechs robbed from Gniezno (as mentioned above) and whom he wanted to build up as a second protecting saint besides St Wenceslas, whose 'servant' he was.¹⁹

His 'clerical agenda' was above all the fate of the bishopric (and the cathedral chapter) of Prague and its properties: the only full-text charter quoted by him (and a few, now unknown ones, referred to) relate to its foundation, expanse, and

¹⁶ Třeštík, 'O Kosmovi', pp. 12–14. See also his other studies, such as *Kosmas: studie s výběrem z Kosmovy Kroniky* (Prague: Svobodné slovo, 1966), pp. 113–20; *Počátky Přemyslovců* (Prague: Nakl. Lidové Noviny, 2008), pp. 99–116; and *Mýty kmene Čechů (7.–10. století): Tři studie ke starým pověstem českým* (Prague: Nakl. Lidové Noviny, 2003).

¹⁷ Cosmas of Prague, *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, trans. by Lisa Wolverton (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), p. 11.

¹⁸ Emphasized by Marie Bláhová, *Staročeská kronika tak řečeného Dalimila v kontextu středověké historiografie latinského kulturního okruhu a její pramenná hodnota* [*Staročeská kronika tak řečeného Dalimila*, III] (Prague: Academia, 1995), pp. 97–101.

¹⁹ So Oldřich Králík, *Kosmova kronika a předchozí tradice* (Prague: Vyšehrad, 1976), pp. 206–38.

properties.²⁰ Words put into the mouths of some leading men of the realm suggest that he was also concerned about the promotion of foreigners to church dignities, although he acknowledged the merits of several German or Saxon prelates. True, he underlined in more than one instance that they spoke the Slavic language. Cosmas's remarks about surviving pagan customs (on which there is more below) are clearly those of a churchman dissatisfied with the level of Christian observance among the people, but otherwise he did not seem to have a 'crusading soul' as did the anonymous author of the *Gesta principum Polonorum*²¹ or, for that matter, much of an obvious missionary zeal.

Christian Community and the Other

As Třeštík pointed out, Cosmas was above all Czech. That he was Christian is self-evident, not merely from the fact that he was a canon of Prague cathedral, but also from his aforementioned repeated references to the Bible and his religious concerns. However, he had the 'bad luck' that the enemies of the Czechs and the disturbers of the peace and quiet of the community were all — with the exception of the Prague Jews, on whom there is more below — also Christians. He had plenty of depreciative words for Poles, Hungarians, and Germans, but none of these were non-Christians. (In this sense, the anonymous author of the *Gesta principum Polonorum* or the Hungarian chroniclers were 'better off', as Pomeranians, Prussians, Cumans, and other enemies were clearly definable as pagans in contrast to the Christian 'in-group'.)

Moreover, his identification with the community of Czechs is not identical with a 'Christian community'. In concert with his clerical concerns, he more than once wrote that many of his countrymen were still practising pagan rites and thus were hardly active members of a Christian community. Speaking about the legendary sorceress Thetka, who taught the people all kinds of demon worship, he added: 'Thus even up to this day some villagers are like pagans: some worship springs or fires, some revere groves and trees or stones, some sacrifice to hillocks or mountains,

²⁰ Marie Bláhová, 'Die Beziehungen Böhmens zum Reich in der Zeit der Salier und frühen Staufer im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen böhmischen Geschichtsschreibung', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 74 (1992), 23–48 (p. 27), regards Cosmas as a spokesman of the clerical circles of the Prague cathedral.

²¹ This expression was used by A. F. Grabski, 'Polska wobec idei wypraw krzyżowych na przełomie XI i XII w.: "Duch krzyżowy" Anonima Galla', *Zapiski Historyczne*, 26 (1961), 37–64.

others pray to mute and deaf idols made by themselves and implore them to guard their houses and them.²² Then, for the year 1093, he wrote:

Item supersticiosas instituciones, quas villani, adhuc semipagani, in pentecosten tertia sive quarta feria observabant, offerentes libamina super fonts mactabant victimas et demonibus immolabant, item sepulturas, que fiebant in silvis et in campis, [...] has abhominaciones et alias sacrileges adinventiones dux bonus, ne ultra fierent in populo Dei, exterminavit.²³

[The good Duke rooted out the superstitious practice of the still half-pagan peasants observed on Tuesday or Wednesday after Pentecost when they made libations at wells and ate sacrifices offered to demons; the burial of the dead in woods and fields; [...] abominable and sacrilegious things that should not happen among the people of God.]

Still, there are a few rare passages that one may read as an assertion of the identity of 'all Czechs' with a Christian community. The closest to this may be the description of a 'national holiday' in 1110: 'When, during the next year, Duke Vladislav and all the Czech people were celebrating the birthday of their patron Wenceslas with joy and happiness [...]' ('Eodem anno duce Wladizlao et universa plebe Boemorum cum iocunditate et leticia sui patroni Wencezlai celebrantibus natalicia [...]'). However, only a few lines further, Cosmas quotes messengers alerting the Czechs to the danger of an enemy attack and saying for the sake of classicizing 'Mars calls you to fight' ('Mars vocat vos ad prelia'), thus freely mixing pagan-Roman mythology with the festivities of the holy martyr.²⁴ Or should one count the repeated references to the people crying *Kyrie Eleison* (or, in a corrupted form, *Krelessu*) upon the election of a duke or similar occasion as an identification of the Czechs with a Christian community? I think this is hardly conclusive.

Cosmas must have been aware of the growing myth of St Wenceslas as 'eternal ruler' of Bohemia and the Czechs as his *familia*.²⁵ Although the transfiguration of St Wenceslas into a heavenly knight 'leading' the Czech army to victory arose only after Cosmas's time, the expulsion of the Poles from Prague in 1002 was assigned by him to the 'intercession of St Wenceslas'.²⁶ In another episode, a prisoners' liberation miracle dated to the year 1091 is credited to the two patron saints.

²² Cosmas, *Chronica*, I. 4, p. 10. However, the 'description' of the pagan customs is mainly borrowed from Sedulius, *Carm. Pasch.* 1. 295.

²³ Cosmas, *Chronica*, III. 1, p. 161.

²⁴ Cosmas, *Chronica*, III. 35, p. 206.

²⁵ See e.g., Wolverton, *Hastening*, pp. 148–75; and Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. by Éva Pálmai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), esp. pp. 100–08 and 163–66 (both with extensive bibliography).

²⁶ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I. 36, p. 64.

Cosmas connected this to the peace made between King Vratislav and his son Břetislav, who were ready to meet in battle, thus avoiding 'the greatest crime committed since the foundation of Prague' ('post conditam urbem Pragam pessimum facinus patratum fuisset').²⁷ Thus, one may argue that the idea of holy patrons of the Czechs intervening in their fate did establish a framework for a Christian community above and beyond the political unity as underlined by Třeštík, even if this aspect was not exactly central to Cosmas's concerns.

As mentioned above, there is, however, one group of people that he was eager to identify as non-Christian enemies of the Czechs, expressly identified with the agents of Satan: the Jews of Prague. In the first instance, he put words into the mouth of Wirpirk, wife of Conrad of Bohemia, suggesting to the Duke an alternative to attacking Moravia:

Nam quaecumque hic longe in tuis finibus spolia queris habenda, ostendam tibi potiora in medio tui regni posita. Nusquam enim melius ditaberis nec amplius magnificaberis quam in suburbio Pragensi et vico Wissegradensi. Ibi Iudei auro et argento plenissimi, [...] nusquam magis Vulcanum videbis furem, quam cum utramque urbem predictam videas ardentem.²⁸

[For whatever spoils you seek to get there — far away from your boundaries — I can show you more precious ones lying in the centre of your kingdom. Because nowhere can you enrich or exalt yourself more than in the suburb of Prague and in the town of Vyšehrad. There are the Jews, most rich in gold and silver [...], nowhere else will you see Vulcan raging more than if you set both of the said towns on fire.]

Then about the troops of the First Crusade: 'Since their army was so numerous that they could not take one route, some of them, while crossing our country attacked, *with God's permission*, the Jews, forcibly baptized them, and killed those resisting' (my emphasis).²⁹ But most elaborately for 1098, Cosmas recorded that when the Duke was informed that some of the Jews fled and took their wealth with them in secret, some to Poland and others to Hungary, he sent his chamberlain with a few warriors to 'rob them from head to toe' ('ut eos a vertice usque ad talos expoliarent'). The chamberlain spoke to them thus, and Cosmas found it appropriate to break out in verse:

O gens progenita manzeribus Ismahelita,
Ut sibi dicatis, dux mandat cur fugiatis

²⁷ Cosmas, *Chronica*, II. 47, pp. 154–55.

²⁸ Cosmas, *Chronica*, II. 45, p. 152.

²⁹ Cosmas, *Chronica*, III. 4, p. 164: 'Qui quoniam propter multitudinem exercitus una via simul ire non poterant, quidam ex eis per hanc nostram terram dum transirent, permittente Deo irruerunt super Iudeos et eos invitos baptizabant, contradicentes vero trucidabant.'

Et partas gratis cur gazas attenuatis?
 Interea quecumque mea sunt, sunt mea cuncta.
 Nullas de Solimis res divitiasve tulistis.
 Uno pro nummo ter deni Vespasiano
 Cesare proscripti, sparsi sic estis in orbe.
 Macri venistis, macri quo vultis eati.

[You sons of Israel, bastards of whores,³⁰
 You have to tell the Duke, he orders, why you flee
 And take away the freely gotten treasures?
 For all is mine, mine is here everything.
 You took nothing, no wealth from Jerusalem
 When sold by Vespasian, the Caesar, three for a coin³¹
 And scattered you were all over the world;
 Poor you arrived and poor you may depart.]³²

Then they broke into the houses, searched them, and took all treasures and all the better furniture they found there. 'Oh, how much money was taken on that day from the wretched Jews' — concluded Cosmas — 'not even from burning Troy were such riches gathered up on the shores of Euboeia.'³³

And finally, for the year 1121, Cosmas was pleased to report that

Dei virtus et Dei sapientia cuncta suo nutu gubernans subsistencia hanc terrulam dignatus est sua eruere clemencia a laqueo Satane et eius filii Iacobi Apelle. Cuius picea dextra quecumque tetigerit, inquinat, et oris anhelitus ceu basilisci fetidus, quos afflat, necat; de quo etiam plurimi testantur veridici homines, quod sepe visus sit Sathan in humana effigie eius lateri adherere atque sua obsequia exhibere. [...] Quod autem dux gratia Dei instructus Christiana mancipia ab omnibus Iudeis redemit et, ut nullus ultra christianus serviret eis, interdixit, 'Amen, amen', inquam [...].

[the power and wisdom of God that governs all that exist by its wink deigned to rescue by His clemency this little country from the snares of Satan and his son, Jacob the Jew.³⁴ His

³⁰ Cf. Deuteronomy 23. 2: 'A mamzer, that is to say, one born of a prostitute'.

³¹ This goes back to the apocryphal gospel *Vindicta Salvatoris* § 17 (ed. by Constantin Tischendorf (Leipzig: Medselohn, 1876), p. 478) but Cosmas may have known it rather from Wipo, *Gesta Chuonradi*, c. 33, in *Die Werke Wipos*, ed. by Harry Breslau, MGH SRG, [61] (Hannover: Hahn, 1915), p. 53.

³² Trans. by Dr Barbara Reynolds.

³³ Cosmas, *Chronica*, III. 5, pp. 165–66: 'O quantum pecunie miseris Iudeis illa die est sublatum, nec ex succensa Troia tantum diviciarum in Euboyco littore fuit collatum.' Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid*, 9. 70.

³⁴ On this, see Samuel Steiner, 'Der Sturz des Vicedominus Jacob (1124)', *Jahrbücher der Gesellschaft für die Geschichte der Juden in der Čechoslovakischen Republik*, 2 (1930), 17–49.

pitch-black hand stains everything it touches and with the breath of his mouth, stinking like that of the basilisk, he kills whatever he blows at. Several trustworthy men testify having seen Satan in human form accompany him as his follower. [...] And the duke, instructed by the grace of God, bought the Christian servants of all Jews free and prohibited that henceforth any Christian may serve them³⁵ — to which I say Amen, Amen.]

Cosmas regretted that other Jews managed to free Jacob from jail, but adds a praise of Mary Magdalene, on whose day the ‘fiend’ was unmasked.³⁶

To be sure, anti-Semitism is a well-known device through which one can define a visible out-group, but hardly sufficient to establish the cohesion of the in-group. While Cosmas’s views were widespread in medieval Europe, it is worth noting that they do not appear in the twelfth-century (and even later) narratives of the region.³⁷ It is true, however, that the Prague Jewish community was one of the most important ones in Europe. Nonetheless, it would be an overstatement to regard the *Chronicle*’s anti-Jewish passages as serious attempts by Cosmas to strengthen the Christian identity of the non-Jews.

Pagan Past — Christian Present

Another approach to finding out about the author’s attempt at identifying his readership — of which we know nothing more than the few names of fellow intellectuals (as Třeštík calls them) to whom the book is dedicated³⁸ — with a Christian community might be to look at the description and characterization of persons whom Cosmas identified, implicitly or explicitly, as non-Christians. These include the vaguely described group of wanderers following the Babelian split of mankind, the ancient ancestors of the Czechs; the predecessors of the dynasty’s founder, the legendary ploughman Přemysl himself; and his immediate successors, who preceded the first baptized ruler. One may argue that if they are all presented in a negative light, this would indicate a fairly clear dissimilarity to ‘us’, the Christian readers or listeners. Alas, we cannot find such an unequivocal distinction.

³⁵ The prohibition of Christians serving Jews is a recurrent item in medieval legislation and goes back to the Theodosian Code (3. 1. 5. 1. 128), repeated in Justinian’s *Codex* (1. 10. 2. 11. 62).

³⁶ Cosmas, *Chronica*, III. 57, pp. 231–32.

³⁷ See *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. by Michael A. Signer and John van Engen (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2001).

³⁸ Provost Severus/Šebířof Mělník, Master Gervase, probably schoolmaster of St Vitus cathedral in Prague, and Clement, abbot of Břevnov.

The 'vagabonds' under the leadership of a certain Bohemus, also known as Čech,³⁹ are clearly pagans. They have gods in plural and carry around their *penates*. When it comes to naming the new land, they choose 'quasi ex divino [...] oraculo' the name Bohemia. Thereupon their leader raised his hands to the sky and wished that the land would nourish them from generation to generation. Surely, a man whose name the country carried ever since could not have been despised by his late Christian descendants. Writing about the first — clearly pagan — inhabitants of the land, Cosmas prefaces the passage with one of his 'comparatist-moralizing' sentences:

Quorum autem morum, quam honestorum vel quante simplicitatis et quam ammirande prohibitatis tunc temporis fuerint homines quamque inter se fideles et in semetipsos misericordes, cuius etiam modestie, sobrietatis, continentie, si quis his modernis hominibus valde contraria imitantibus pleno ore narrare temptaverit, in magnum deveniret fastidium. Propterea hec pretermittimus et pauca ac que sunt vera illius prime etatis de qualitate dicere cupimus. Felix nimium erat etas illa, modico contenta sumptu nec timido inflata fastu.⁴⁰

[Anyone who tried to describe fully to modern folk how these people lived, would come in for much scorn, as they do the very opposite: how honest, simple, admirably noble, faithful among themselves and merciful to each other, how modest, sober, and restrained they were. Therefore, we leave these aside and wish only to say a few but truthful things about the quality of that first age. Very happy was that age, content with modest fare and not puffed up with swollen pride.

And so on. The virtuous legendary heathens as opposites of the contemporary depraved Christians. What more?

The father of the three important sisters (one of whom was Libuše), Krok, is characterized with words borrowed from Genesis, where they stand for Noah.⁴¹ Krok is by no means a negative figure, and the author even commiserates with him for having only daughters and even these being seers and sorcerers. His daughter Libuše, the last judge of the ruler-less Czechs, is a difficult case. Once the men who are discontent with her judgement are made out to be ridiculous, but more than once she is denounced as a sorceress. As mentioned above, her fictive sermon to the Czechs about the evils of electing a ruler has good biblical credentials. And then, she was the one who named the founding father of the dynasty as well as pointing out the site of Prague, the *caput regni*. Thus, divine (or at least otherworldly) designation of the ruler and the capital were mediated by Libuše.

³⁹ So in the *Dalimil*, ed. by Daňhelka and others, p. 105.

⁴⁰ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I. 3, pp. 7–8.

⁴¹ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I. 3, p. 9: 'Vir fuit hic in suis gennationibus ad unguem perfectus'; cf. Genesis 6. 9.

The mythical ploughman Přemysl is even more problematic. He was clearly a good man (just as Piast, the Polish ploughman, was⁴²). We find out only *en passant a propos* his death that he had worshipped Pluto all his life. As the founder of the reigning dynasty and the author of the laws by which the Czechs are supposed to still live,⁴³ he cannot be a negative figure. His wise predictions, accompanied by such miracles so as to remind the reader of the Rod of Aaron,⁴⁴ are very much in concert with Christian ethics. Moreover, while explaining the significance of his poor sandals to be kept in Vyšehrad, Přemysl is recorded to have said that they be kept so that future dukes be reminded 'not to unjustly and with pride oppress the people given to them by God because we were all born equal' ('neu homines a Deo sibi commissos iniuste opprimant per superbiam, quia facti sumus omnes equales per naturam'). I believe this is quite a Christian-style 'political theory', if we may call it thus. All told, he surely cannot be cast out of the community, for that would risk blackening the origins of the princely family, whose faithful chronicler our author intended to be.⁴⁵

The situation is somewhat easier regarding the seven mythical princes who are supposed to have followed Přemysl and to have preceded the first baptized ruler, Bořivoj. Their lives and times were summarily dismissed, not only because there was no authentic information available about them but because 'they were, like cattle, given over to gorging and slumber, unlearned and uncultured, for whom, contrary to nature, the body was a source of pleasure, the soul a burden'.⁴⁶ (Words quite similar to those can be found in the *Gesta principum Polonorum* about the early princes of the Poles,⁴⁷ who, however, may have been real persons.) In spite of this

⁴² See *GPP*, I. 1–2, pp. 18–21.

⁴³ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I. 9, p. 21.

⁴⁴ Přemysl's staff bloomed and grew branches in front of the people's messengers; the message of this miracle was not (as in Aaron's case) to prove pre-eminence, but to underline the monarchic principle which was, as we saw, disregarded in Cosmas's times; see Cosmas, *Chronica*, I. 6, pp. 16–17; cf. Numbers 17. 16–24.

⁴⁵ František Graus pointed out the dual legitimization of the Přemyslid dynasty consisting of pre-Christian (pagan, magic) and Christian elements in 'Kirchliche und heidnische (magische) Komponenten der Stellung der Přemysliden: Přemyslidsage und St Wenzelslegende', in *Siedlung und Verfassung Böhmens in der Frühzeit*, ed. by František Graus and Herbert Ludat (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1976), pp. 148–61, with extensive bibliography.

⁴⁶ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I. 9, p. 21: 'ventri et somno dediti, inculti et indocti assimilati sunt peccori, quibus profecto contra naturam corpus voluptati, anima fuit oneri'; cf. Sallust, *Catilina*, I. 1, and 2. 8.

⁴⁷ *GPP*, I. 3, pp. 22–25. On that text, see the preceding chapter by Zbigniew Dalewski.

disclaimer, one of them, Duke Neklan, is described in some detail. First, he is characterized as 'lepore pavidior et Partho fuga velocior',⁴⁸ but later displays positive traits. When the son of his enemy (the duke of the Lučané) was captured, Neklan, 'even though a pagan, moved with mercy toward him'⁴⁹ [...] spared him, as if he were a good catholic'.⁵⁰ Thus, a pagan could behave as a good Christian; and at the end of the story, the pagan Duke is again showing positive characteristics, punishing the perfidious murderer of the aforementioned boy, who hoped for reward for his deed. The 'evil Sorb' chooses to hang himself on a tree — just like Judas (and Cosmas called him *Iudas secundus*). In summary, then, the contrast between pagans and Christians cannot be said to be clear and definitive enough to establish a Christian community in contrast to its heathen predecessors.

True, a definite discontinuity between the pagan past and Christian history is emphasized in the *Chronicle*. The fact that Duke Bořivoj was baptized (with one passage claiming that this was done by no less a figure than St Methodius, which is chronologically impossible) is mentioned twice.⁵¹ Moreover, all events preceding this are undated, while the subsequent narrative is systematically dated (even in years for which there is no entry) by the 'year of the Incarnation of Our Lord'. Thus a formal caesura is marked out between these two epochs. Yet nothing similar to the story of the miraculous enlightenment of Mieszko in the *Gesta principum Polonorum*⁵² or the rather detailed description of the Christianization of the people by St Stephen in Hungarian narratives⁵³ has a parallel in Cosmas. Besides the baptism of Bořivoj, the Christianization of the Czech people is passed over by referring to other — partly known, partly unknown — texts, such as the 'Privilege of the Moravian Church' and so on. Then, later, Bishop Thietmar is reported to have summarily 'converted many pagans'⁵⁴ but, as we saw, all this was not quite completely successful, or at least not to the standards of Dean Cosmas.

⁴⁸ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I, 12, p. 26. Cf. Horace, *Carmina*, 2, 13, 17.

⁴⁹ Luke 7, 13.

⁵⁰ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I, 13, p. 29: 'quamvis paganus, tamen ut catholicus bonus misericordia super eum motus [...] pepercit'.

⁵¹ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I, 10, p. 22; and again I, 34, p. 32, dated to 894.

⁵² *GPP*, I, 4, pp. 26–29.

⁵³ Not only in the lives of St Stephen and Bishop Gerard, but also in the so-called National Chronicle (*Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV*, cc. 64–67 and 70, ed. by Alexander Domanovszky, in *SRH*, I, 313–18 and 321–22).

⁵⁴ Cosmas, *Chronica*, I, 24, p. 46.

All in all, it seems that among the several ‘identities’ of Cosmas, his being Czech and intending to convey a cohesive communal feeling to ‘all Czechs’ was paramount. Within this category, his devotion to St Wenceslas and St Adalbert and his intention to strengthen this devotion in his readers served the same purpose. That he and his people were Christians was so self-evident that it needed no emphasis. To underline the Christian character of the Czechs as the heroes of his story may not have appeared necessary to him, even if he complained about some members of the ‘nation’ not being exactly perfect in the faith. Some two hundred years after the beginning of the Christianization of the people, that they were Catholics seems to have been taken for granted, especially since the enemies abroad — the most explicit ‘out-group’ — were all also Christian peoples; thus religion was unsuitable for lines of demarcation. In the ‘hierarchy of identities’ of Cosmas, fidelity to the Přemyslid dukes, more or less identical with the Czech ‘nation’, was another important element. One may add that he was a man of Prague: the city and its bishopric was his ‘home’. These loyalties, and the claim of the continuous settlement of the Czechs since times immemorial in the country ‘girded on all sides by a ring of mountains’, precluded making any sharp distinction between pagan ancestors — such as the first settlers, the mythical founder of the dynasty, or the seer who designated Prague as *caput regni* — and their Christian descendants. Thus it is difficult to judge to what extent the *Chronicle* worked to establish or strengthen Christian identity. The readers to whom the work was dedicated certainly did not need any encouragement in this matter. ‘All good men’, for whom Cosmas wrote, were implicitly parts of the Christian community. Enemies within were either fellow Christians, such as the most hated ‘evil kindred’ called by him the Vršovci,⁵⁵ or the most widely known Others of medieval Europe, the Jews. As we have seen, he did have strong feelings about the latter, and regarded them as agents of Satan, fiends of the Czechs and, more or less explicitly, of all Christians. But his language of denunciation used against Poles, Hungarians, and even the German emperor was not much milder and served more the ‘Czech’ than the ‘Christian’ identity of his own people.

⁵⁵ Cosmas, *Chronica*, passim (see Index, p. 278, s.v. Wrissovici). However, Wolverson, *Hastening*, pp. 48–49, was unable to establish a kin-group with this name from the surviving records.

‘*MORE PAGANISMO*’: REFLECTIONS ON THE PAGAN
AND CHRISTIAN PAST IN THE *GESTA HUNGARORUM*
OF THE HUNGARIAN ANONYMOUS NOTARY

László Veszprémy

Among the medieval narrative sources in Hungary, the oldest surviving text is the *Gesta Hungarorum* (*GH*) by the Anonymous Notary (often cited as ‘Anonymus’) from the years around 1200–10.¹ This short chronicle consisting of fifty-seven chapters is dedicated entirely to the pagan past of the Hungarians, to their history before the Christian conversion: wanderings, land-taking, fights with local dukes, and raids in Europe. We know only the first letter of the author’s name; that is why he is also called ‘*P. dictus*’ master. He was the notary of a certain King Béla, mostly identified as Béla III (d. 1196), and he probably studied as a cleric in France or Italy. His chronicle is the first written source in Hungary naming Attila the Hun as the ancestor of the Árpád royal dynasty. He widely used oral traditions as well as written sources, such as the Bible, the chronicle of Regino of Prüm, and the histories of Troy and of Alexander the Great, with the final result of such a blending being rather fable-like. The anonymous narrator provides a very detailed geographic description of Hungary, connecting concurrent place names with fictive heroes of the past, without any historical authenticity for those of the

¹ Anonymus (P. Magister), *Gesta Hungarorum*, ed. by Dezső Pais, in *SRH* (an updated repr. with a bibliography, ed. by Kornél Szovák and László Veszprémy (Budapest: Nap Kiadó, 1999)), I, 13–118; and *Gesta Hungarorum*. I am grateful to Prof. Martyn Rady for using his draft of the English translation of the *Gesta*, directly sent to me, and now available in *Anonymous, Notary of King Béla, The Deeds of the Hungarians, Master Roger’s Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament about the Destruction of Hungary by the Tartars*, ed. by János M. Bak, Martyn Rady, and László Veszprémy, Central European Medieval Texts, 5 (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010).

ninth and tenth centuries. His work in translated and facsimile editions is still a bestseller in Hungary and Romania, and even now an impressive amount of academic publications have been dedicated to this chronicle.²

The *GH* was preceded by what has been considered the first chronicle in Hungarian historiography, namely the original *Gesta*, or *Urgesta*, which has not survived. This Hungarian *Gesta* was probably written around the turn of the twelfth century, but the exact date is difficult to establish because it has come down to us in the form of the reconstructed 'National Chronicle', dating from the middle of the fourteenth century (*Chronici Hungarici compositio*) and preserved in several manuscripts forming two basic families.³ The oldest of these is the *Illustrated* (or *Pictorial*) *Chronicle* written c. 1358.⁴ The latter is very important because it may contain the earliest accounts of the years after 1000, and thus the history of the emergence of Christian Hungary. There are close textual relationships between the *GH* of the 'anonymous notary' (c. 1200–10), preserved in a contemporary copy from the middle of the thirteenth century, the *Gesta* of Simon of Kéza (c. 1282), preserved only in a modern copy, and the 'National Chronicle' edition; but these textual relations are of little help in reconstructing the lost 'original' *Urgesta*.⁵

Due to these difficulties, we have only vague ideas about the content of its sections deriving from the eleventh century. According to the convincing arguments of Elemér Mályusz and later those of Gyula Kristó, a history of Hungary would have begun with St Stephen, since the primary concern of the ancient authors was

² Kornél Szovák, 'Wer war der anonyme Notar? Zur Bestimmung des Verfassers der *Gesta Ungarorum*', *Ungarn-Jahrbuch*, 19 (1991), 1–16; and István Kapitány, 'Der ungarische Anonymus und Byzanz', in *Byzance et ses voisins: mélanges à la mémoire Gy. Moravcsik*, ed. by Teréz Olajos (Szeged: JATE, 1994), pp. 69–76.

³ *Chronici Hungarici compositio* ('National Chronicle'), ed. by Sándor Domanovszky, in *SRH*, I, 217–504. A facsimile edition of the *Chronicle of Buda* was ed. by Erzsébet Soltész (Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1973).

⁴ A facsimile edition of the *Illustrated (Pictorial) Chronicle* was ed. by Dezső Dercsényi (Budapest: Corvina, 1964, with German and English translations in 1961 and 1969).

⁵ For the Hungarian medieval narrative literature, see Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der 'nationes': Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter*, Münstersche Historische Forschung, 8 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995); Péter Kulcsár, *Inventarium de operibus litterariis ad res Hungaricas pertinentiis ab initiis usque ad annum 1700* (Budapest: Balassi, 2003); Kornél Szovák, 'L'Historiographie hongroise à l'époque arpadienne', in *Les Hongrois et l'Europe: conquête et intégration*, ed. by Sándor Csernus and Klára Korompay (Paris: L'Institut Hongrois de Paris, 1999), pp. 375–84; and Simonis de Kéza, *Gesta Hungarorum*, ed. by László Veszprémy (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), also ed. by Sándor Domanovszky, in *SRH*, I, 129–94.

certainly to describe the emergence of the Christian Hungarian kingdom.⁶ Even the sole surviving early medieval Hungarian annals, the Annals of Pressburg/Bratislava (*Annales Posonienses*), began with the activities of St Adalbert.⁷ Characteristic of the first centuries of Hungarian historiography was the shaping and continuous enlargement of the core of the 'National Chronicle', whose continuators repeatedly tampered with the parts of the passages written earlier. That is why the early Hungarian royal legends, especially the three legends of St Stephen written between c. 1070 and c. 1100, are so precious. *The Legend of St Gerard* has also preserved contemporary eleventh-century historical traditions, although its surviving form dates only to the fourteenth century.⁸ Consequently, it is only in the *GH* that we can see how a Hungarian medieval writer first confronted the pagan past.

The Conversion

Hungarian narrative sources are somewhat reticent on the conversion to Christianity, an indication in itself of a reluctance to view it as a radical turn.⁹ This

⁶ For the arguments of Mályusz and Kristó, see Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 652–57. Márta Font has argued recently that some parts about the *Urheimat* of the Hungarians and their descent from the biblical Cham should refer in some way to a lost first chronicle redaction. Márta Font, 'Keresztény krónikások – pogány hagyomány', in *Memoria rerum: Studies in Honour of Bán Péter*, ed. by Teréz Oborni and László Á. Varga (Eger: Heves Megyei Levéltár, 2008), pp. 179–96; András Róna Tas, 'Ethnogenese und Staatsgründung: Die türkische Komponente in der Ethnogenese des Ungarntums', in *Studien zur Ethnogenese*, 2 vols, Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 78 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998), II, 107–42.

⁷ *Annales Posonienses*, ed. by Imre Madzsar, in *SRH*, I, 119–28 (p. 125).

⁸ *Legenda S. Stephani regis maior et minor atque ab Hartvico episcopo conscripta*, ed. by Emma Bartoniek, in *SRH*, II, 363–440. Hartvik's legend was translated into English by Nora Berend, in *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, ed. by Thomas Head (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 375–98, and translated into German by Thomas Bogvay, in *Die heiligen Könige*, pp. 25–71. *Legenda S. Gerhardi episcopi*, ed. by Imre Madzsar, in *SRH*, II, 461–506; translated into German by Gabriel Silagi, in *Die heiligen Könige*, pp. 73–85. For the Hungarian royal saints, see Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. by Éva Pálmai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Gábor Klaniczay and Edit Madas, 'La Hongrie', in *Hagiographies: histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550*, ed. by Guy Philippart, 2 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), II, 103–60; *Die heiligen Könige: Legenden und Mahnungen aus der Arpadenzeit*, ed. by Thomas Bogvay and others (Vienna: Böhlau, 1976).

⁹ For a general overview, see László Veszprémy, 'Conversion in Chronicles: The Hungarian Case', in *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals*, ed. by Guyda Armstrong and Ian N.

attitude was prompted by the eleventh-century political and military conflicts between the Hungarians and the Germans. In their arguments, the Germans claimed that loyalty to their emperor (*fideles regis/imperatoris*) was equivalent to loyalty to the Christian Church.¹⁰ Consequently, Christians who rebelled were therefore subject to punishment by the Church. At the end of the eleventh century, this claim received a further boost from the bloody clashes with armies of the First Crusade as they marched through Hungary (the Hungarian royal forces attacked three contingents) — an event which did nothing to improve the reputation of the Kingdom of Hungary in Europe.¹¹

Since medieval authors traced the history of the Hungarian people to long before the Christian era, blurring the sharp dividing line between the pagan and Christian ages helped justify the extended discussion of Hungarian prehistory. Interestingly, legends and chronicles are similar in this regard. This is partly because both genres belonged to court literature in Hungary, and commissioners expected the authors to apply the ideological and legal arguments prevalent in the court. *The Greater Legend of St Stephen* bears out continuity just as the chronicles do. The former makes explicit mention of the fact that imperial Rome had been pagan before it became Christian, just as the pagan Hungarians ravaged Christian Europe upon divine afflatus before their conversion. This statement was meant to prove that the German emperors professing continuity with the Roman Empire had no grounds on which to reproach the Hungarians for their pagan past.¹²

The sources do, of course, make references to the Hungarians' pagan past. *The Greater Legend of St Stephen* mentions 'sons of perdition and ignorance, rude and errant people';¹³ and the *Minor Legend* tells of 'barbaric people captured by the error of infidelity, who followed vain and sacrilegious superstitions according the practice of the pagans'.¹⁴ According to the legend of St Emeric, 'Pannonia was

Wood (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 133–46; Nora Berend, József Laszlovszky, and Béla Zsolt Szakács, 'The Kingdom of Hungary', in *Christianization*, p. 319–68.

¹⁰ Arnold Angenendt, *Kaiserherrschaft und Königstaufe: Kaiser, Könige und Päpste als geistliche Patrone in der abendländischen Missionsgeschichte* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), pp. 313–14.

¹¹ John France, *Victory in the East: A Military History of the First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 90–95.

¹² Veszprémy, 'Conversion in Chronicles', pp. 133–46.

¹³ *Legenda S. Stephani regis*, ed. by Bartoniek, p. 378: 'filios perditionis et ignorantiae, populum rudem et vagum'.

¹⁴ *Legenda S. Stephani regis*, ed. by Bartoniek, p. 394: 'barbarica gens errore infidelitatis sue teneretur, et ritu gentiliū vanas sacrilegasque superstitiones sequeretur'.

polluted with shameful pagan practices'.¹⁵ However, the main motive for stressing continuity must have been a defence against foreign accusations, which started in the eleventh century. Both papal and imperial propaganda expressed doubts several times as to whether the Hungarians had completely and thoroughly converted, and the pagan revolt of 1046 gave them some justification. For example, the *Annales Altachenses* state that the persons who in 1046 blinded King Peter of Hungary, friendly to the Germans, were 'pagani et ignominiosi' (pagan and ignominious) Hungarians.¹⁶ In the eleventh-century German-Polish historiographical polemics, the German writers identify the Poles' disobedience to the German emperor as a rebellion against the Christian Church, bringing up their recent and superficial Christianity as proof. Thietmar of Merseburg (1018) referred to Bolesław the Brave — who had risen against the Germans — as the foe of all believers, just as Gerhoh of Reichersberg or Otto of Freising found correlation between the Hungarians' infidelity and anti-German sentiments in the twelfth century. The latter even doubted that King Stephen deserved the status of saint, despite the widespread reverence for him at that time. These German authors also spoke of a continuity of pagan and barbaric traditions in Hungarian history. The argumentation of the Hungarian chroniclers and legend writers was presumably a defence against such ideological accusations. That is why they must have stressed the continuity of Hungarian history and its historical redemption, and the rapid and complete success of the conversion by St Stephen.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Legenda S. Emerici ducis*, ed. by Emma Bartoniek, in *SRH*, II, 441–60 (p. 451): 'Pannonia fedis paganismis ritibus fedata.'

¹⁶ For the conflicts of the theory on '*fidelis Dei et regis*', see Angenendt, *Kaiserherrschaft*, p. 313. On the different contemporary opinions on Hungarian Christianity, see the text of Gerhoh in *Catalogus fontium historiae Hungariae aevo ducum et regum ex stirpe Arpad descendendum ab anno Christi DCCC usque ad annum MCCC*, ed. by Ferenc Albin Gombos, 3 vols (Budapest: Szent István Akadémia, 1937–38), II, 1030–31. Gerhoh, *Commentarius in psalmum LXIV*, c. 58. *Libelli de lite, imperatorum et pontificum*, vol. III, ed. by Ernst Dümmler and others (Hannover: Hahn, 1897; repr. 1957), p. 463: 'in terra Hungarica et barbarica vix nomine tenus Christianorum principum dominio subdita'. For Otto of Freising, see his *Cronica*, 6. 27.

¹⁷ Even in the fifteenth century, some chroniclers revoked the memory of the pagan uprisings, as Thomas Ebensdorfer in his *Chronicon Austrie*. He stated that the double cross referred to the fact that the Hungarians were converted for the second time after pagan revolts. Dalimil explained the Hungarian cross in a similar way. Iván Bertényi, 'A magyar heraldika a 13–19. századi szépirodalomban', *Turul*, 74 (2001), 77–82.

The Anonymous Notary's View on Pagan Matters

The anonymous author clearly drew on examples of pagan customs from his own time and projected them back to the age of the Conquest; the expression *more paganismo* appears a total of seven times. These could have been living customs or rituals preserved in the oral tradition or even in the everyday practice in or outside the country. The author describes with fine perception the nomadic custom of entering into a contract, the Covenant of Blood (Chapters 5 and 10), horse sacrifice (16 and 22), pagan burial — on which he does not go into detail (15) — and martial affairs (7 and 25).

It is clear that before their conversion, the Hungarians were regarded by chroniclers as pagans with no knowledge of the possible Pannonian continuity of Christianity or even the Jewish faith of the Khazars. Firm commitment to the Christian faith was a recurring theme in the literature of political argumentation in the eleventh century, but it gradually lost its relevance during twelfth-century consolidation, so that by 1200 a radically altered, solidly Christian image of the Hungarian monarchy appeared in Western Europe. The country and its kings were mentioned in a favourable way by famous troubadours who accompanied the Princess of Aragon to Buda around 1200 (Vidal, Faidi, and Raimon).¹⁸ Perhaps the horseman statue of unidentifiable origin in the cathedral of Bamberg had already been 'discovered' as the figure of the Holy King Stephen. It was here that a relative of the next Hungarian queen (Gertrude), during his tenure as priest and later bishop (1206–42), solemnly commemorated St Stephen in liturgy. By then, in France — where the Hungarians had previously been referred to in the Song of Roland as pagan Saracens — Hungary was finally admitted as a legitimate Christian kingdom. Boncompagno da Signa, professor of rhetoric at the University of Bologna around 1170, correctly writes that sons of foreign dignitaries were sent to receive an upbringing at the Hungarian court.¹⁹

¹⁸ László Veszprémy, 'Ungarn im Europa des frühen 13. Jhs.', in *Elisabeth von Thüringen: Eine europäische Heilige. Aufsätze*, ed. by Dieter Blume and Matthias Werner (Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2007), pp. 59–66; Zoltán Falvy, *Mediterranean Culture and Troubadour Music* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1986); and Ferenc Zemplényi, *Az európai udvari kultúra és a magyar irodalom* (Budapest: Universitas, 1998), pp. 68–91.

¹⁹ Maren Zerbes, 'Reiterskulptur', in *Bayern, Ungarn, Tausend Jahre*, ed. by Wolfgang Jahn and others (Augsburg: Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte, 2001), pp. 47–49; Luise Abramowski, 'Der Bamberger Reiter: Vom Endkaiser zum heiligen König Stephan von Ungarn', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 98 (1987), 206–29; Hannes Möhring, 'Der Bamberger Reiter', in *Ausstellungskatalog: Saladin und die Kreuzfahrer*, ed. by Alfried Wiczorek and others (Mainz: Zabern, 2005),

Thus, the author of the *GH* was entirely justified in confining his work to the history of the pagan Hungarians, and occasionally stressed this by reference to the *more paganismo*. (This may be regarded as tongue-in-cheek, since throughout his chronicle the Hungarians appear solely in the pagan stage.) He does not criticize their pagan past at all, although he used the singular in reference to their marital practices ('every man kept only to his wife', and not 'habebant uxores' (had wives), as his original source, the *Exordia Scythica*, had done) to avoid the supposed reprehension of polygamy;²⁰ or while discussing their raids, he informs us without any comments about the Hungarians' 'violence and monstrous fury' in Lombardy and their 'doing many bad things' (in Chapter 53, quoting the chronicle of Regino of Prüm's Continuator).²¹ It cannot be a coincidence that the *GH* was written at almost the same time as Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*, although Saxo discussed the legendary pagan past in much greater detail. What they definitely have in common, however, is that they both begin with the earliest legendary dukes and kings.²²

The anonymous notary is unique among Latin historiographers of Hungary in his classification of certain customs, often as *more paganismo*, despite the fact that the entire *Gesta* is confined to the prehistory (i.e. the pre-Christian past) of the Hungarians — he makes just a few references to their conversion. In this sense, the author is the Hungarians' first geographer, setting down an astonishingly high number of place-names (but, with one exception, never the seats of bishoprics or monastic sites), and also their first ethnographer.

p. 423; Sándor Csernus, 'La Hongrie, les Français et les premières croisades', in *Les Hongrois et l'Europe*, ed. by Csernus and Korompay, pp. 411–26; and Kornél Szovák, 'Boncompagnus: Adalék a 13. század eleji magyar történet külföldi forrásaihoz', in *'Quasi liber et pictura': Studies in Honour of András Kubinyi*, ed. by Gyöngyi Kovács (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, 2004), pp. 503–11.

²⁰ *Exordia Scythica*, in *Chronica minora*, ed. by Theodor Mommsen, MGH AA, 11 (Munich: MGH, 1894; repr. 1981), p. 319.

²¹ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 122. For Regino, see *Reginonis abbatiss Prumiensis Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi*, ed. by Friedrich Kurze, MGH SRG, 50 (Hannover: Hahn, 1890; repr. 1978), p. 148.

²² For Saxo Grammaticus, see Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 444–57. For the Central European pagan narrative tradition, see Font, 'Keresztény krónikások', pp. 179–96; and Dániel Bagi, 'Heidentum und Christentum in den Urgeschichtsdarstellungen der ersten historischen Synthesen Ostmitteleuropas im Mittelalter: Eine historische Region und zwei Modelle', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 54 (2005), 159–73.

Pagan Burials and Banquets

Significantly, he regarded the omission of Christian burial as a part of the pagan tradition, mentioning burials that did not take place around a church, as in Chapter 15:

Ubi etiam longo post tempore ipse Ketel et filius suus Tulma more paganismo sepulti sunt, sed terram illam, que nunc Ketelpotaca vocatur, posteritas eius usque ad tempora Andree regis.²³

[A long time later, Ketel and his son, Tulma, were buried there in pagan manner, but his descendants had that land, which is now called Ketelpotaca, to the times of King Andrew.]

In this case, it is likely that the grave of the founding father of the Ketel clan was still known around 1200–10 to be on ancient land, which by implication was not adjacent to any church. The custom of isolated burials — not in the vicinity of a church — may have continued for some time, as proven by the *reambulatio* sections of the charters. These burial sites (probably mounds) must have been clearly visible, because they were of use as landmarks during the riding of the borders, from the early tenth to late thirteenth centuries. But no finds have survived, reminding one of the stone-stela (*Steinstele*) similar to those in Mongolia. That is why the vernacular variant of the burial place (Hung. *sírhely*), sometimes called heathen grave (Hung. *pogánysír*, Lat. *sepulchra paganorum*), are among the first Hungarian words recorded in documents.²⁴ It is highly possible that the word *bálvány* (later meaning ‘pagan idol’) referred to the same natural or artificial pieces or columns of stone (mentioned for the first time in the Deed of Pannonhalma, 1001/02).²⁵ It seems that the custom of an individual burial far away from churches survived among the rich up to the late twelfth century.²⁶ The first written testimony of stone or wooden memorial posts (‘in positione lapidum seu lignorum in signum monumenti’)²⁷

²³ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 60.

²⁴ For an overview of the burial places mentioned in medieval charters, see Gyula Kristó, ‘Sírhelyekre vonatkozó adatok korai okleveleinkben’, *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis. Acta Historica*, 71 (1981), 21–27. For the burial place dated to 1055, see *Diplomata Hungariae antiquissima*, vol. I: 1000–1131, ed. by György Györffy (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1992). For the charter of 1075 stating ‘ad sepulchrum Gunreidi in monticulo, ubi antiquorum corpora sunt sepulta’, see p. 215.

²⁵ *Diplomata Hungariae*, ed. by Györffy, p. 41.

²⁶ For an example of such a grave dated to 1181, see Kristó, ‘Sírhelyekre’, pp. 26–27.

²⁷ *Monumenta ecclesiae Strigoniensis*, 3 vols, ed. by Nándor Knauz and others (Esztergom: Buzárovits, 1874–1924), III, 13; cited by Pál Lővei, ‘Temetői sírjelek a középkori Magyarországon’,

came from 1322; later, wooden fences around graves were also mentioned. On the other hand, many tombstones of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries represent crosses set on mounds, probably burial mounds. Recently, more than thirty cemeteries dated from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries have been discovered, in which hundreds of graves were covered with a stone slab or block, roughly made and lacking any decoration.²⁸

Later, some Roman stone remains may have been included among these, as can be deduced from a mention in Simon of Kéza's chronicle.²⁹ These Roman altars, burials, or milestones were not higher than one or two meters, but even in the nineteenth century some original sepulchres existed in Western Hungary in their original significant height.³⁰ Simon of Kéza reports, for instance, that after a battle the Huns 'gathered the bodies of the companions and solemnly buried them and their captain Keve [Keve means 'stone' in old Hungarian] according to Scythian rites (*more Scitico*) at a place by the highway where a stone statue (*statua lapidea*) is erected'.³¹ The same stone is probably mentioned in the *Anonymi Descriptio Europae Orientalis* (c. 1308):

Ungari [...] in signum victoriae perpetuum erexerunt ibi lapideam marmoreum permaximum, ubi est scripta prefata victoria qui adhuc perseverat usque in hodiernum diem.³²

[The Hungarians [...] erected here a huge marble statue commemorating and describing their eternal victory, and it is preserved to this day.]

in '... a halál árnyékának völgyében járok': *A középkori templom körüli temetők kutatása*, ed. by Ágnes Ritoók and Erika Simonyi (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, 2005), pp. 77–84 (p. 78).

²⁸ For an excellent overview, see Lővei, 'Temetői sírjelek a középkori Magyarországon'; and Milan Hanuliak, 'Gräber unter Grabsteinen im 11–14. Jahrhundert', *Slovenska Archeologia*, 27 (1979), 167–86.

²⁹ de Kéza, *Gesta Hungarorum*, ed. by Veszprémy, pp. 36–37. Probably the same altar stone is mentioned in the *Anonymi Descriptio Europae Orientalis*, ed. by Olgierd Górka (Cracow: Academia Litterarum, 1916), pp. 44–45, from c. 1308.

³⁰ *Die römische Inschriften Ungarns*, ed. by Jenő Fitz and others, 6 vols (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2001), VI, no. 1383, which survived in the church of Szentiván; for the milestones, see III, no. 3020. An altar dedicated to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva is 120 cm high. Even the famous stone of Dzsingis — now in the Hermitage, St Petersburg — is not higher than 210.5 cm; see Dovdoi Bayar, 'Gedenkstätten und Steinskulpturen der Altürkischen Zeit', in *Dschingis Khan und seine Erben: Der Weltreich der Mongolen* (Schallaburg: Hirmer, 2006), pp. 69–74, and also see Catalogue, p. 27.

³¹ de Kéza, *Gesta Hungarorum*, ed. by Veszprémy, c. 9, pp. 36–37.

³² *Anonymi Descriptio*, ed. by Górka, pp. 44–45.

The Church struggled against this custom in several ways. According to *The Legend of St Gerard*, chapels were erected on non-ecclesiastical burial sites ('ex post baptism of non-Christian burial sites' as János Bak puts it).³³ The early church council of 1092 prescribed burial beside churches,³⁴ clearly an attempt to link the living community to a church via reverence for the dead. A similar case is mentioned by the Swedish *Vita sancti Botvidi* and the Bohemian chronicle of Cosmas of Prague, and the topic frequently recurred in laws throughout Europe.³⁵

The *Hungarian Chronicle* mentions pagan burial in connection with pagan rebellion when telling the story of Prince Levente (Chapter 86), 'who, if he had lived longer and attained royal power, would have spoiled all of Hungary with idolatrous paganism (*paganisma ydolatria*)'.³⁶ It is also said that he lived in a non-Catholic manner and was buried beside his grandfather, who was buried in the pagan manner (*more paganismo*). The *Hungarian Chronicle* takes an openly hostile and condemnatory approach to these examples, unlike the less emotional description in the *GH*.

Interestingly, the church-building tradition described in the *GH* was invoked to sanctify the grave of the founder of the dynasty, Árpád (Chapter 52):

dux Arpad [...] honorifice sepultus est supra caput unius parvi fluminis, qui descendit per alveum lapideum in civitatem Atthile regis, ubi etiam post conversionem Hungarorum edificata est ecclesia, que vocatur Alba, sub honore beate Marie virginis.³⁷

[Árpád [...] was buried with honour at the head of a small river that flows through a stone culvert to the city of King Attila where, after the conversion of the Hungarians was built the church that is called Alba, to the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary.]

There are similar stories from contemporary Europe: in Denmark, the father of Harald Bluetooth had a Christian reburial, and in Rus' pagan princes were posthumously baptized and reburied.³⁸

³³ János M. Bak, 'Signs of Conversion in Central European Laws', in *Christianizing Peoples*, ed. by Armstrong and Wood, pp. 115–24 (pp. 119–20).

³⁴ *Decreta regni mediaevalis Hungariae, 1000–1301: The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary, 1000–1301*, ed. by János M. Bak and others, 3 vols, 2nd edn (Idyllwild: Schlacks, 1999), I, 57.

³⁵ Nils Blomkvist, Stefan Brink, and Thomas Lindkvist, 'The Kingdom of Sweden', in *Christianization*, pp. 167–213 (pp. 186–88); and Petr Sommer, Dušan Třeštík, and Josef Žemlička, 'Bohemia and Moravia', in *Christianization*, pp. 214–62 (pp. 232–33). For Cosmas, see Bak, 'Signs of Conversion', p. 120; and Cosmas, *Chronica*, p. 88.

³⁶ *Chronici Hungarici compositio*, in *SRH*, ed. by Domanovszky, p. 344.

³⁷ *Gesta Hungarorum*, pp. 120–21.

³⁸ Nora Berend, 'Introduction', in *Christianization*, pp. 1–46 (p. 19).

The author is also on the right road regarding the offering of animal sacrifices at celebrations, thanksgivings, and sacrificial meals as belonging to the system of pre-Christian beliefs. In Chapter 16, the valiant warriors, after successfully climbing a mount, look around in their joy and 'loving that place more than can be said they made a great sacrifice [using the ancient Hungarian phrase *magnum aldamas*], killing the plumpest horse'. Similarly, in Chapter 22, delighted over reinforcing the borders between Hungary and Transylvania, they 'made sacrifice [again with the word *aldumas*] in pagan manner'.³⁹ The sacrifice, and especially the sacrifice and subsequent eating, of a horse was linked to paganism across Europe and was contended with from Iceland to England in texts from the Irish penitentials or *Heimskringla* of Snorri Sturluson, to the history of Adam of Bremen or the Norwegian Gulathing Law.⁴⁰ The problem was not with the kind of meat, but rather the fact that it resulted from a sacrifice.⁴¹ Giving horses to churches as a *mortuarium* or as an *oblatio pro anima* was also common in the West, although in Hungary it was in some way more closely connected to the former pagan customs. Even *servi* (*torlo* or *dusnok*) were donated to churches up to the early fourteenth century in order to support the clerics with meat, bread, and alcohol for the yearly memorial service and banquets.⁴²

What Has the GH Neglected?

It is interesting, however, that the author of the *GH* missed out on several things included in the *Hungarian Chronicle* (Chapter 82) and the *Legend of St Gerard*:

³⁹ *Gesta Hungarorum*, pp. 61–62 and 72. That is why in Zilah (today Zalău, Romania, mentioned by Anonymus in Chapter 22), a pagan altar dedicated to Tuhutum was erected by the famous sculptor János Fadrusz in 1902. It became a symbol of the Hungarian presence in Transylvania and was demolished by the Romanian security forces in 1968.

⁴⁰ Robert Bartlett, 'From Paganism to Christianity in Medieval Europe', in *Christianization*, pp. 47–72 (pp. 63–65); and Sverre Bagge and Saebjorg Walaker Nordeide, 'The Kingdom of Norway', in *Christianization*, pp. 121–66 (pp. 124–25).

⁴¹ Bartlett, 'From Paganism', p. 69; and Berend, Laszlovszky, and Szakács, 'Kingdom of Hungary', p. 321, agree that horsemeat eaten simply as food could lack any religious connotation. For a broader view, see Csanád Bálint, 'Les Tombes à ensevelissement de cheval chez les Hongrois aux IX^e–XI^e siècles', *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 2 (1982), 5–36.

⁴² László Solymosi, 'Das kirchliche Mortuarium im mittelalterlichen Ungarn', in *Forschungen über Siebenbürgen und seine Nachbarn: Festschrift für Attila T. Szabó und Zsigmond Jakó*, ed. by Kálmán Benda and others, 2 vols (Munich: Ungarisches Institut, 1987), I, 51–66.

‘in accordance with the rebellious pagan custom (*ritu paganorum*) he [the pagan rebel, namely Vata] shaved his head and wore his hair in three plaits (*cincinnos per tres partes*).’⁴³ The latter sources also mention the wizards and fortune-tellers (*phitonissae, magi, aruspices*, and *deae*) among the rebels of 1046 (later 1061), one of whom (a *dea*) chewed off her leg in prison and died. They also tell us that Christians were prohibited from marrying blood relatives of the pagan rebels called Vata and John. This tale was also present in the older, now-lost version of the chronicle, which therefore must have prominently featured confrontations with paganism. *The Legend of St Gerard* adds to all of this the eating of horseflesh and sacrifice to evil spirits, and the laws of Ladislav mention ‘sacrifices next to wells, giving offerings to trees, fountains, and stones according to heathen rites’.⁴⁴ The *GH* is silent on all these.

On the contrary, the *GH* actually asserts that pagan Hungarians were actively supported by divine grace assisting them in the unchallenged acquisition of ancient lands (Chapter 17). ‘Their descendants (Ed, Edumen) have, with the aid of divine grace, been worthy to keep the lands till now.’⁴⁵ The author, emphasizing that these people are still pagans, resorts to archaizing: ‘they made great sacrifices to the immortal gods (*diis immortalibus*)’.⁴⁶ The author finds an even more interesting form of expression in Chapter 33, where he notes that the Slavs along the River Ipoly (*Ipel* in Slovakian) feared the Hungarian warriors because ‘divine grace was with them’. He also adds that the former were all the more afraid because

audierant ducem Arpadium filium Almi ducis ex progenie Athile regis descendisse [...] tunc omnes Sclauī [...] propter timorem eorum se sua libera sponte subiugaverunt eis.⁴⁷

[they had heard that Duke Árpád, son of Duke Álmos, was descended of the line of King Attila. [...] Then all the Slavs [...] for fear of them subordinated themselves to them of their own free will.]

Consequently, we can speak of a dynastic identity based on Christianity and the genealogy deriving from Attila. It is as if the author was correcting himself, realizing that the fear of the Hun king was more authentic in terms of the logic of the passage and its pagan context than the grace of God. But divine grace returns to the

⁴³ *Chronici Hungarici compositio*, ed. by Domanovszky, pp. 337–39; and *Legenda S. Gerhardi*, ed. by Madzsar, p. 501.

⁴⁴ *Decreta regni mediaevalis Hungariae*, ed. by Bak and others, I, 56–58.

⁴⁵ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 64.

⁴⁶ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 56.

⁴⁷ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 84.

narrative in Chapter 37, also in connection with the Slavs, 'because the grace of God went before them, they not only conquered [the Slavs] and took all their castles [...] but also still hold them'.⁴⁸ It is as if pagan power might be enough to capture anything, but that Providence itself, through some kind of divine judgement, was necessary for a prolonged possession.

This attitude is somewhat at odds with the description of the decisive battle (Chapter 39), when we are told that before the battle, Árpád, 'whose helper was the Lord of All, besought God tearfully'.⁴⁹ In Chapter 44, they managed to cross the River Temes (*Timiș* in Romanian) with ease because it was 'as if God's grace was with them',⁵⁰ but a few words later this statement becomes more definitive: 'because God with His grace went before the Hungarians, He gave them a great victory'.⁵¹

Military Pagan Customs

The author of the *GH* also provides an intriguing discussion of military customs and techniques. Despite attempts by the Hungarian royal court, Western-type heavy armour did not become prominent in Hungary in the Middle Ages, and the bow and arrow always remained a traditional element of the Hungarian armament.⁵² Yet the nomadic peoples (the Pechenegs) who settled after the Conquest and the auxiliary forces they provided may have led to the distorted view that fighting with mounted archers was a peculiarly pagan affair. The anonymous notary describes a tournament held in Árpád's court (using the words *turnamentum* and *dextrarius*) and contrasts the people involved there with 'the other young men played in pagan manner with bows and arrows'.⁵³

⁴⁸ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 90: 'Et quia gratia dei antecedebat eos, non solummodo ipsos subiugaverunt, verum etiam omnia castra eorum ceperunt [...] usque modo.'

⁴⁹ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 94.

⁵⁰ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 104: 'sicut divina gratia erat eis previa'.

⁵¹ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 104: 'Et quia deus sua gratia antecedebat Hungaros, dedit eis victoriam magnam.'

⁵² Maximilian Georg Kellner, *Die Ungarneinfälle im Bild der Quellen bis 1150* (Munich: Ungarisches Institut, 1997); and *The Ancient Hungarians: Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. by István Fodor (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, 1996).

⁵³ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 110.

An obscure aspect of Anonymus's treatment of military customs is his contradictory comments on the use of the bow and arrow. In Chapter 25, he speaks about the Vlachs and Slavs as 'the basest people (*viliores homines*) of the whole world, because [...] they had nothing else for arms but bows and arrows'.⁵⁴ This is perhaps the only place in the book where a kind of archaizing may be detected: in the prehistoric retrospection of the first chapter, he speaks of the unmatched archery of the Hungarians/Scythians. The comments in Chapter 25 (as well as in Chapter 46) set against the earlier remark are somewhat surprising.

Yet it is very likely that the narrator makes a distinction between the bows and arrows used by the Slavs and the 'ballista' mentioned as a weapon of the Hungarians (Chapter 51). Several authors, including myself, have noted a possible meaning of *ballista* as 'crossbow'. Support for this appears in Anonymus's usage: in Chapter 46, he identifies the bow (*arcus* or *sagitta*) as the nomads' weapon *more paganismo*, which makes sense only if the author is thinking of the crossbow as a modern weapon.⁵⁵ This recurs in Chapter 36: the weapons of the seven Hungarian tribes — their bows — were something the Slavs had never seen, and must have been of a higher technical standard:

Hoc cum vidissent Sclavi et Boemi [...], quod isti, qui dicuntur Hetumoger, talibus uterentur armis, timuerunt valde, quia talis armatura nunquam visa fuit eis.⁵⁶

[When the Slavs and Bohemians [...] saw how those who were called *Hetumoger* [that is the seven Hungarian tribes] used such arms, they feared greatly, because such weaponry (*armatura*) had never been seen by them.]

The author's respect for arms is manifest from his account of Kadocsa defeating Zobor with his lance, in which the wording, associated with the *turnamentum*, reflects the spirit of chivalry. It is interesting that Anonymus includes such aspects of warfare in his discussion of the pagan tradition (*more paganismo*). Likewise, in Chapter 7 a river crossing presented in a finely conveyed account is referred to as a pagan custom: 'they swam across the River Etyl sitting on leather bags [called here *tolbu*] in pagan manner'.⁵⁷ Rubruk's description of thirteenth-century Tartar

⁵⁴ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 76: 'habitatores terre illius viliores homines essent totius mundi, quia essent Blasii et Scauli, quia alia arma non haberent, nisi arcum et sagittas'.

⁵⁵ László Veszprémy, 'A számszerij használatának kezdetei Magyarországon', in *Lovagvilág Magyarországon*, ed. by László Veszprémy (Budapest: Argumentum, 2008), pp. 136–45.

⁵⁶ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 88.

⁵⁷ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 42: 'et fluvium Etyl super tulbu sedentes ritu paganismo transnataverunt'. *SRH*, I, 41. n. 5: 'Vocabulum tulbou, quod hoc uno loco reperitur quodque tulbou legitur,

customs corroborates the veracity of this description.⁵⁸ Perhaps our author was an eyewitness of such a river crossing, if he travelled widely in Eastern Europe.

The Covenant of Blood

The anonymous notary similarly considered the Covenant of Blood to be a part of the historical tradition not requiring further comment. This was the act by which the chiefs of the seven tribes swore allegiance to each other and their leader, Álmos.⁵⁹ The author may have had a general knowledge of the fundamentally different blood-covenant ceremony followed by Eastern peoples, possibly obtained from nomads settling in Hungary or in the course of foreign travels, perhaps among the Cumans. In Chapter 10, the Cumans swore allegiance to the Hungarians, and 'they [...] confirmed in pagan manner with a sworn pledge', about which no further detail is given; and the Hungarians reciprocated.⁶⁰

The Covenant of Blood also has significance for subsequent Hungarian constitutional law: the Hungarian chieftains accepted Árpád's father and his successors on mutual terms, but with a pledge of obedience. This is fortunately described in more detail in Chapter 5: 'the aforesaid men swore an oath [...], confirmed in pagan manner with their own blood spilled in a single vessel'.⁶¹ This must have been fairly common among nomads, because it clearly formed the basis of the Western image of blood-drinking 'brutish barbarians', an image sometimes applied to the Hungarians themselves, including the *GH*, where it is borrowed from the

e lingua Turcorum sumptum esse et significationem "uter", Hungarice "bőrsák, tömlő" habere videtur.'

⁵⁸ Felföldi Szabolcs, 'A nomád hadviselés egyik jellegzetes problémája: a folyón való átkelés', in *Fegyveres nomádok, nomád fegyveresek Fegyveres nomádok, nomád fegyverek*, ed. by László Balogh and László Keller (Budapest: Balassi, 2004), pp. 75–91.

⁵⁹ Harry Tegnaeus, *Blood-brothers* (Stockholm: Philosophical Library, 1952); Henry Serruys, 'A Note on Arrows and Oaths among the Mongols', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 78 (1978), 279–93; László Vajda, 'Ruchlose und heidnische Dinge', in *Explanations et tractationes Fenno-Ugricas in honorem Hans Fromm*, ed. by Erhard F. Schiefer, Finnisch-Ugrische Bibliothek, 3 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1979), pp. 373–403; Klaus Oschema, 'Blood-brothers: A Ritual of Friendship and the Construction of the Imagined Barbarian in the Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval Studies*, 32 (2006), 275–301; and *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 144.

⁶⁰ *Gesta Hungarorum*, pp. 48–50: 'Hoc etiam [...] fide iuramenti more paganismo firmaverunt.'

⁶¹ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 40: 'Tunc supradicti viri [...] more paganismo fuis propriis sanguinibus in unum vas ratum fecerunt iuramentum.'

Exordia Scythica. The Belgian traveller Father Monstaert, who in the 1940s described a similar ritual among the Mongols, is usually cited as the source of evidence for blood-brotherhood in the East.⁶² Anonymus apparently is familiar with the view common in Western medieval literature that pagans, owing to their ignorance of the Christian God, did not keep their word. On the other hand, the author states that the Covenant was made for eternity: 'though pagans, they nevertheless kept the oath that they made among themselves until they died'.⁶³

It is well known that the Covenant of Blood was also incorporated into the customs of Western chivalry. This was known to Western chroniclers as a practice by which alliances were made with Orientals during wars in the Holy Land, but it is interesting that in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Western Europe, the Covenant of Blood was also adopted into the ceremony of swearing brotherhood in chivalrous fraternities, as witnessed in one of the Lancelot romances.⁶⁴ It still retained a certain oriental exotic character: Matthew of Paris associated it with the native Irish, and Joinville mentioned it as taking place between the Byzantines and the Cumans, and elsewhere between the princes of the Holy Land and the Saracens. Members of chivalrous confraternities symbolized their becoming one body or blood relations, not usually through this ritual so much as by breaking the Blessed Sacrament into several pieces and sharing it amongst themselves, as Maurice Keen pointed out. The anonymous notary seems not to have known of this Western European background, and mentions it among what he categorizes as *more paganismo*; but of course he may still have heard of chivalrous rituals, perhaps in Italy.

The White Horse Story

Our author also makes critical references to the oral heritage of epic songs and tales, as in the case of Botond, who — according to the Hungarian tradition — cut

⁶² Hansgerd Göckenjan, 'Eid und Vertrag bei den altaischen Völker', *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher*, n.s., 16 (1999/2000), 11–31.

⁶³ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 40: 'Et licet pagani fuissent, fidem tamen iuramenti, quam tunc fecerant inter se, usque ad obitum ipsorum servaverunt tali modo.'

⁶⁴ Maurice Keen, 'Brotherhood in Arms', *History*, 47 (1962), 1–17; repr. in Maurice Hugh Keen, *Nobles, Knights, and Men-at-Arms in the Middle Ages* (London: Hambledon, 1996), pp. 43–62.

the Golden Gate of Constantinople with his axe (Chapter 42).⁶⁵ But instead of telling the story, which is recorded only later in a fourteenth-century chronicle, he states:

Sed ego, quia in nullo codice hystoriographorum inveni, nisi ex falsis fabulis rusticorum audivi, ideo ad presens opus scribere non proposui.⁶⁶

[But as I have found this in no book of historians, and have heard it only from the spurious tales of countryfolk, I do not propose so to write in the present work.]

But in other cases he believed what he heard. There is a well-known story that the Hungarians bought their country from the Moravian (Bulgarian in the *GH*) prince by giving gifts like horses in exchange for land, grass, and water — thus, for the whole country. This story can be linked to the nomadic practice of making covenants and oaths. Further complicating the issue is that Anonymus found the pattern for this legal arrangement in the story of Troy — which he finds more convincing than folk tradition — following its details and expanding on the story. He talks in Chapter 14 of twelve white horses, twelve camels, and many other gifts. Nonetheless, he lays out the story of acquiring the land by trickery: the Slavic chieftain — whom Anonymus presents to us as a 'Bulgarian' vassal of the Byzantines while the chronicles portray him as the Moravian Svatopluk — is not familiar with the significance of nomadic gift-giving for property or land acquisition.⁶⁷ The symbolic meaning of land, water, and grass in the account of pledges made in a pagan manner is also verifiably ancient; it is referred to in a peace treaty made between the Onugur chieftain Omurtag and Byzantine emperor Leo V in 815.⁶⁸ Accounts similar to the story of the white horse may have been found in Widukind, where the Saxons acquire their country by deceit: a Saxon youth purchases dust from Thuringian land in exchange for gold, sprinkles the dust around the perimeter of some land and, regarding it as his own, takes it by armed force.⁶⁹ Jordanes, another classical source, tells of a similar ploy by which the Onogurs acquire

⁶⁵ Johannes de Thurocz, *Chronica Hungarorum*, vol. II: *Commentarii*, part 1: *Ab initii usque ad annum 1301*, ed. by Elemér Mályusz, with Julio Kristó, *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum*, 8 (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1988), pp. 236–39; and Simonis de Kéza, *Gesta Hungarorum*, ed. by Veszprémy, pp. 100–01.

⁶⁶ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 100.

⁶⁷ *Gesta Hungarorum*, pp. 58–60.

⁶⁸ Göckenjan, 'Eid und Vertrag', p. 16.

⁶⁹ Widukind of Corvey, *Rerum gestarum Saxoniarum*, ed. by Georg Heinrich Pertz, *MGH SS*, 3 (Hannover: Hahn, 1839), p. 418.

land through the purchase of a horse.⁷⁰ Yet the influence of examples from Western historiography cannot be proved philologically, and it is not the chronicle of Anonymus that preserves this story in its fullest form, but the later Hungarian chronicles.⁷¹ Simon of Kéza, who was familiar with Jordanes's *Getica*, interestingly omits his story about the Onogurs' purchase of land with a horse and does not compare it with the Hungarian oral tradition, which indicates the vitality of the Hungarian tradition even in the late thirteenth century. There is some disagreement as to when this story was first introduced into the chronicle, but what seems certain is the importance of the oral tradition being preserved.⁷²

Contrary to the chronicle's focus on the pagan past, but no doubt in line with the author's intentions, the text ends with a reference to Christianity, albeit in an unexpected way. Modern readers tended to interpret literally the last lines which narrate that the incoming Pecheneg chieftain Thonuzoba was 'vain in belief, refused to be a Christian, and he was buried alive with his wife', in some kind of cruel nomadic custom rather than a figurative sense as 'not being converted'.⁷³ But it is known from Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans (Romans 6. 3–11) that pagans buried themselves in the tropological sense; and in a similar vein, the *Historia abbreviata consulum Andegavorum*, a chronicle contemporary with the *GH*, stated: 'Vale, vive, precor, sed vive Deo, nam vivere mundo mors est, sed vera est vivere vita Deo' ('May [God] bless you, may you live long, but I beseech you to live in devotion to God, for to live for this world is death; true life is in God').⁷⁴

Conclusion

The Hungarian chroniclers around the year 1200 had a hard time when it came to writing the pre-Christian history of their people. They probably could find

⁷⁰ Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. by Theodor Mommsen, MGH AA, 5.1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1882), p. 63.

⁷¹ *Chronici Hungarici compositio*, in *SRH*, ed. by Domanovszky, I, 287–90.

⁷² Mályusz-Kristó, *Johannes de Thurocz*, I, 152–55; and *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 156.

⁷³ *Gesta Hungarorum*, p. 162; and Gábor Kiss, 'Két szomszédos Árpád-kori temető Szombathelyen', in *A halál árnyékának*, ed. by Ritoók and Simonyi pp. 151–62. A cemetery situated far away from the church but without any special 'pagan' archaeological characteristics was probably used by the Pechenegs, who guarded the military border in Szombathely.

⁷⁴ *Historia abbreviata consulum Andegavorum: Chroniques d'Anjou*, ed. by Paul Marchegay and André Salmon, 2 vols (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1856; repr. 1965), I, 363; and János Bollók, 'L'Authenticité historique de la légende de Thonuzoba', *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestiensis de R. Eötvös nominatae: Linguistica*, 11 (1980), 31–42.

nothing on the subject in earlier chronicles and only brief allusions in the legends of the indigenous saints. Hence the author's strategy was to portray the Hungarians from the outset as being a people led by the Holy Spirit and living in accordance with Christian customs. In keeping with this, they held chivalrous jousts, used crossbows against the simple bows of the previous inhabitants of Pannonia, and forever settled the division of power between the kings and nobility by a blood contract in a way fitting for a Christian kingdom.

The author never refers to the Hungarians as pagans. He merely permits the inference by mentioning that in the era of St Stephen, the descendants of the story's heroes converted to Christianity under their first king. For an author working around 1200, reconstructing the actual changes in religion and in the way of life for pagans who had converted to Christianity long before would have been a difficult task. He himself was a cleric — several scholars have suggested he was a bishop — living in a mature Christian society. If the Hungarians were not to be expressly presented as pagans, they had to at least have some pagan customs, so as to afford some distance — a distance consciously minimized by the author — between their Christian age and the pre-Christian past. They were therefore described with the customs that the author called *more paganismo*, judiciously selected from an oral tradition and possibly influenced by the author's own travels across Eastern Europe. Thus, the *GH* was an undertaking unparalleled in medieval Hungarian historiography: to write the story of the pagan Hungarians embedded in the salvation history, as if they were just waiting to be converted. That he succeeded is beyond doubt: after all, his story not only was adopted by Simon of Kéza in the late thirteenth century and later repeated in the 'National Chronicle', but also was considered authentic and credible by Hungarian historians until the turn of the twentieth century.

Part Four

Early Historical Narratives in Eastern Europe

CHRISTIAN CHRONOLOGY, UNIVERSAL HISTORY, AND THE ORIGIN OF CHRONICLE WRITING IN RUS'

Oleksiy P. Tolochko

The Primary Chronicle *and the Preceding Chronicle Writing in Rus'*

The earliest extant Rus' chronicle, the *Povest' vremennykh let* — or the *Primary Chronicle*, as it came to be known in Western scholarship — was most likely created in 1116 in the Kievan *Vydubychi* monastery of St Michael by its father superior Sylvester, under the patronage of the Kievan prince Volodimer Monomakh.¹ Had chronicle studies been obliged to deal with real texts only, then that would probably mean that history writing as we now know it emerged in Rus' at roughly the same time as in the Polish or Czech lands — with the *Primary Chronicle* as an inaugurating work similar to the historical texts of Gallus Anonymus and Cosmas of Prague. Yet since the early twentieth century, there has been a consensus among scholars dealing with the chronicles of early Rus' that the *Primary Chronicle* is but the culmination of a long development, a masterpiece of the genre that originated considerably earlier than the turn of the twelfth century. When chronicle writing first emerged in Rus', was it indeed the initial mode of history writing? If not, what the earliest attempts at writing history may have looked like or were styled after is a matter of considerable dispute, with several hypotheses suggested so far. A critical overview of them can be found in the following pages, but I am far from hoping to offer definitive answers to the debated

¹ For details, see Aleksey Tolochko, 'Perechityvaia pripisku Silvestra 1116 g.', *Ruthenica*, 7 (2008), 154–65. Cf. Aleksey Gippius, 'K voprosu o redaktsiakh Povesti vremennykh let. I', *Slavianovedenie*, 2007.5, 20–44; and Aleksey Gippius, 'K voprosu o redaktsiakh Povesti vremennykh let. II', *Slavianovedenie*, 2008.2, 3–24, with the previous literature on this issue. Cf. Donald Ostrowski in the following chapter.

questions, which for all we know may forever remain obscure and controversial. Yet their discussion in this chapter will serve as a useful introduction to early East European chronicle writing.

Reasons, ideological as well as emotional, for the dating of the 'first chronicles' to an earlier period are obvious. It has seemed somehow unfair that there existed such a conspicuous gap between the conversion of Rus' to Christianity in 988 and the much later date of the first surviving chronicle. Moreover, to acknowledge such an outstanding breach would mean rendering the earliest Kievan history — from the ninth to eleventh century — as essentially legendary, with no support in contemporaneous sources and without a hope of ever being rescued from the domain of medieval fiction, a sacrifice no one has been ready to make. The obvious trouble here, however, is that no textual tradition earlier than the *Primary Chronicle* and independent of it has survived, if it indeed existed. Yet the gap of roughly 130 years between the conversion and the *Primary Chronicle* has been bridged with numerous hypothetical chronicles whose manuscript tradition was presumably lost at a very early stage, but not before they had contributed their materials to the *Primary Chronicle*, thus forming a substantial part of its body. To recover their content (if not their exact wording) from the text of the *Primary Chronicle* has been a search for the Holy Grail of East European chronicle studies. Two principal techniques have been employed for the task: the internal critique of the *Primary Chronicle's* text and the collation of it with the later chronicles of Novgorod, believed to have preserved a tradition earlier than the one witnessed in the *Primary Chronicle*. The combination of the two yielded a scholarly construction consisting of an impressive succession of chronicles stretching from the late eleventh century all the way back to the times immediately after the conversion. It is now believed that the *Primary Chronicle* was based on an earlier chronicle composed in the 1090s in Kiev (termed the 'Initial Compilation'),² which drew on an even earlier work of the 1070s (labelled as the 'Nikon Compilation'), which in turn incorporated the chronicle of the 1030s (named the 'Ancient Compilation'). Before the latter date, 'no man's land' stretches, with scholars virtually unrestricted in their conjectures as to the nature of the historical texts produced and their possible subject matters. The majority vote, it seems, goes towards small-scale and purely narrative pieces on either pagan times or on events leading to the conversion.

² For a very sober discussion of the 'Initial Compilation' and various associated problems, see Alan Timberlake, 'The Redactions of the Primary Chronicle', *Russkii jazyk v nauchnom osveshchenii*, 1 (2001), 196–218.

Historically, the bulk of the scholarly effort has produced numerous discussions on what these hypothetical chronicles may have looked like, how many of them existed, and what kind of textual relationships they could have possibly shared. Predictably, opinions have been plentiful and diverse. I will not go into the discussion, as fascinating as it is, of this hall of mirrors, for it will take us away from our immediate topic on the 'Heart of Darkness' of Russian textology. In short, I am rather skeptical about the existence of these hypothetically postulated chronicles (at least in the manner they are being imagined in academic literature), and think that most of them have been created for the convenience of scholars unable or unwilling to work with the actual texts. All that said, however, there can be little doubt that there existed a chronicle tradition prior to the *Primary Chronicle*, and that in certain segments the *Primary Chronicle* is a faithful witness to it. A compelling set of evidence can be produced in support of the view that continuous annals were kept in Kiev since at least the 1040s if not earlier through the eleventh century, which would account for the abundance of precise dating in the *Primary Chronicle* — including the exact date, weekday, and sometimes even the hour.

The Problem of Models

For the benefit of the readers not intimately acquainted with the chronicle tradition of Eastern Europe, let me offer a reminder of the basic structure of the *Primary Chronicle* and indeed any Rus' chronicle. It is, essentially, annalistic: on the left side of a page an uninterrupted row of years is noted, to which entries describing an event or events of a particular year are attached to the right. The entries may vary in length, detail, and the level of a narrative component, yet this basic structure is never abandoned or significantly altered. Indeed, it constitutes the core of history writing as practised in medieval Rus'. With one notable thirteenth-century exception (the *Galician-Volhynian Chronicle*³), the chronicle is the only type of historical writing known in Eastern Europe until the mid-sixteenth century. As in any annalistic history, some of the year numbers have no corresponding entries and are left blank. The year numbers are noted nevertheless, so as not to interrupt the continuous flow of time. This rigid and stable structure should suggest that chronology is invested with primacy over the entries and their accidental content,⁴ and that

³ The name is traditional and might be quite misleading; see note 5.

⁴ The inspiration here is an unlikely authority for things medieval, namely Hayden White and his penetrating analysis of the nature of annalistic history writing. See Hayden White, 'The Value of

chronicle writing is neither conceivable nor indeed possible if divorced from chronology.⁵

The uniformly annalistic structure of the Rus' chronicles — apparently intrinsic for the whole enterprise — challenges historians with the problem of its possible origin and defies attempts to establish its source culture. For one, it creates tension between the allegedly Byzantine origins of the Rus' Christian culture and an annalistic mode of history writing. This contradiction has been noted (if not fully acknowledged) by the very first students of the early chronicles. Still, it remains not quite appreciated as being important for the understanding of the early Rus' chronicle's origin.

Byzantium, which furnished Rus' with the Christian faith and hence is generally viewed as the ultimate source of the Rus' culture and book learning, was not able to provide a ready model for the inception of a chronicle as an annalistic project. As Cyril Mango convincingly demonstrated a while ago, Byzantium had nothing to offer to Rus' in that respect. Byzantine historiography evolved along an entirely different path, and the annalistic type of history writing never enjoyed popularity there.⁶ Greek-speaking Byzantine authors styled themselves after their classical predecessors and preferred a narrative mode of history writing for which absolute chronology (in contrast to the relative chronology of described events) was rather superfluous.

Around the time of the Rus' conversion, the Byzantines practised two principal types of historical writing. One is a large universal *chronicle* stretching from the Creation to (preferably) the author's own times. Another type is *history*, compositions smaller in scope with the focus on a well-defined subject, be it the rule of an emperor or a certain war or something similar. None was structured in an annalistic mode — the way the Rus' chronicle was — relying heavily on the narrative discourse.

Narrativity in Representation of Reality', in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 1–25.

⁵ Even at a much later stage, historical compositions devoid of chronological grid were viewed as inadequate and lacking an essential component for being considered a proper history. In the thirteenth century, the so-called *Galician-Volhynian Chronicle* (and this is the exception mentioned above) was composed in imitation of the narrative history of a Byzantine style. It was a radical innovation at the time. In the early fifteenth century, however, an uncompromising editor 'improved' it by imposing his own and rather artificial chronological grid on the text. See Aleksey P. Tolochko, 'Proiskhozhdenie khronologii Ipatievskogo spiska Galitsko-Volynskoi letopisi', *Paleoslavica*, 13 (2005), 81–108.

⁶ Cyril Mango, 'The Tradition of Byzantine Chronography', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 12–13 (1988–89), 360–72.

The absence of contemporaneous Byzantine models easily transferable after the Rus' conversion leads one to speculate whether a certain specimen of the so-called minor chronicles (arranged in a chronological sequence of events) somehow influenced the emergence of the genre in Rus'. Indeed, a type of historical texts approaching the annalistic mode existed in Byzantium, but their published corpus⁷ makes one wonder if their heyday was not too late to be of any importance for the Rus' chronicle. In any case, none of the 'minor chronicles' turns up in Slavonic translations.⁸

The absence of models in Byzantium is puzzling and forces one to look elsewhere. The Latin West with its far-reaching tradition of annalistic writing is, of course, a prime suspect here. Unfortunately, cultural (in contrast to political or matrimonial) exchange with the West has left virtually no traces in available evidence. Besides, regions immediately bordering Rus' to the west, like Poland or Hungary (which could have potentially served as transmitters), did not develop an annalistic tradition of their own until much later times.⁹ Moving further west (and north-west), August Ludwig Schlözer, a scholar who introduced the critical method in the study of chronicles in the late eighteenth century, pointed to a striking affinity that the early Rus' chronicle shares with the Anglo-Saxon annals. A reasonable 'conspiracy theory' can be advanced in support of the two being somehow related,¹⁰ but both the distance and the linguistic barrier make any direct influence highly improbable.¹¹ Whatever similarities may have existed between the Western annals and the early Rus' chronicle, there simply was no culturally influential Latin-educated milieu in Kiev capable of introducing the annalistic idea into Slavonic writings. Of course, chances are that even a single manuscript accidentally imported (and

⁷ Peter Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 3 vols, *Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae*, 12. 1–3 (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975–79).

⁸ There seems to be no reason for Slavonic translators to get interested in these texts with their narrow chronological focus and local attachments. And, of course, the Syriac tradition never made it into Slavonic writings.

⁹ For an overview of early medieval history writing in Poland and Hungary, see Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung in Europa der 'nationes': Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter*, Münstersche Historische Forschung, 8 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995), pp. 484–522 and pp. 652–85.

¹⁰ Incidentally, Prince Volodimer Monomakh of Kiev, the sponsor of the *Primary Chronicle* and himself a writer, was married to Gytha, a daughter of the last Anglo-Saxon king, Harold.

¹¹ With its better-preserved manuscript tradition and vernacular language, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, however, remains important for comparative studies of the Rus' chronicle-writing; see the pioneering study by Timofey Guimon, 'Povest vremennykh let v svete anglo-saksonskikh paralelej', *Drevniaia Rus': Voprosy medievistiki*, 33 (2008), 18–19.

subsequently lost) could have inspired an imitation. Yet it is safer to remain within the documented range of texts.

What samples of history were, theoretically, accessible around the time that chronicle writing commenced in Rus'? For our purposes, only those available in Slavonic translations are of interest.¹² Two chronicles, the sixth-century *Chronographia* by John Malala¹³ and the ninth-century *Chronicle* by George Hamartolus, are the first to be mentioned. Both are large-scale universal chronicles and were valued precisely for their accounts on ancient and biblical history. The third item on the list is the early ninth-century *Chronographikon syntomon* by Nikephoros, patriarch of Constantinople. It presents the lists of biblical patriarchs, Hebrew and Persian kings, and Roman and Byzantine emperors — with an indication of the number of years each lived or ruled and concise notices on the events that happened in their times. This work is perhaps the closest to the annals, yet not quite: it lacks a general chronological grid (either in the form of *anno mundi* or Olympiads). Two more items on the list have an uncertain status: *The Jewish War* by Josephus Flavius¹⁴ and the *Alexander Romance*¹⁵ were definitely in circulation by the twelfth century. They apparently were part of the received canon, but their availability for chronicles in eleventh-century Rus' remains doubtful.

Curiously, those few Byzantine histories that were organized around chronology, like the *Paschal Chronicle*,¹⁶ were never translated. We do not need to blame the eleventh-century Kievites for this omission, for the choices were not even theirs to make. What they had in their hands was part of the received canon established by the tenth-century Bulgarian translations and transplanted to Rus'.

¹² For a recent survey of the Byzantine chronography in Slavonic translations, see Evgenij Vodolazkin, *Vsemirnaja istorija v literature Drevnej Rusi (na materiale khronograficheskogo i palejnogo povestvovaniia 11–15 vekov)* (St Petersburg: Pushkinskij dom, 2008).

¹³ On the Slavonic tradition of John Malala, see most recently Simon Franklin, 'Malalas in Slavonic,' in *Byzantium – Rus – Russia: Studies in the Translation of Christian Culture*, Variorum Collected Studies Series, 754 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 276–87.

¹⁴ Most recently published as *Istoria iudeiskoi voyny Iosifa Flavija: Drevnerusskii perevod*, 2 vols (Moscow: Jazyki slavianskoj kultury, 2004).

¹⁵ Published by V. Istrin as *Aleksandria russkikh khronografov: Issledovanie i tekst* (Moscow, 1893).

¹⁶ We may glimpse the reason why the *Paschal Chronicle* was never translated into Slavonic from Warren Treadgold's remarks on its idiosyncratic standing within Byzantine history writing. Its surviving manuscripts are rare, and it seems that even in Byzantium it found very few readers; see Warren Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 340–49.

The Current Paradigm

The matter is further confused by a specific set of ideas developed during the last century within the discipline of East European chronicle studies. The current research paradigm in this field was established in the early twentieth century by the great Russian philologist Aleksey A. Shakhmatov. When his works started to appear in the early 1900s, they were immediately recognized as groundbreaking. An impressively broad command of primary texts and a dazzling talent for combination inspired awe in contemporaries and an almost religious following in the next generations of scholars. It was instantly accepted that with Shakhmatov, the study of chronicles reached an unprecedented technical and theoretical sophistication. Shakhmatov's major contribution to the theory, indeed a revolutionary one that has influenced subsequent scholarship the most, was a completely new notion about the nature of the chronicle. Unlike his predecessors, who viewed the chronicle largely as the product of an annalistic type of history writing, Shakhmatov advanced the idea of chronicles being a specific type of compilation whose author's job was not simply to update the text of his predecessor but rather to completely rewrite the work he had inherited, so as to create, in effect, a completely new narrative. The production of a compilation so envisaged involved, as a rule, the consulting of numerous preceding chronicles, whose texts an author was supposed to weave into his own story line. Also, a chronicler was supposed to interfere liberally with the texts of his sources, cutting them down, amending them, or even creating his own variants to replace those found in his copy text. The image of a chronicler as a passive copyist and continuator was substituted for the one in which he appeared to be an accomplished writer and ideologist. As a result, the chronicle appeared to be a much more complex phenomenon than previously accepted.

Within this interpretative model, the *Primary Chronicle* was viewed as a container of all previous chronicles and, as the matryoshka doll, it could be opened to reveal an earlier chronicle, which (if opened) would expose an even earlier one, and so on down to the earliest text. Shakhmatov insisted that this method had a sound textological foundation.¹⁷ Yet if he was right about the nature of the chronicle, then to recover from the *Primary Chronicle* the text of a preceding author would be a

¹⁷ Within the Russian historiographic tradition, a discussion of the early chronicle-writing requires the handling of all the shifts and slightest shades in Shakhmatov's ideas, and they are all too many. For a Western readership, however, a reference to the scholar's principal work where the method is sufficiently exposed would suffice: Aleksey A. Shakhmatov, *Razyskaniia o drevneishikh russkikh letopisnykh svodakh* (St Petersburg: M. A. Aleksandrov, 1908).

task as monumental in its complexity and as risky in its exercise as the recovery of Cassiodorus's exact wordings from Jordanes's *Getica* would be.¹⁸ However, Shakhmatov's speculations about the lost chronicles have come to be viewed as the only legitimate goal of any inquiry into the early chronicles, at the expense of real texts.

It can be argued that it was Shakhmatov's early classical training that compelled him to impose an image borrowed from classical historiography — with its numerous lost texts of known authors, known only because someone made use of them in surviving works — on the literary tradition of early Rus'. It is also with classical authors in mind that Shakhmatov picked up the image of an authorial compilation with a clear ideological message and the idea of each consecutive chronicler substantially revising the work of his predecessor.

Shakhmatov himself was very vague as to the models for his type of chronicle. Influenced by the 'light edition' Slavophile ideas — still fashionable at the time — but also mindful of the absence of models, he postulated that some unspecified tenth-century Bulgarian chronicles had presumably served as models for the emerging genre of the Rus' chronicle. No such chronicle has been discovered since, and it is now increasingly more apparent that, astonishing cultural achievements notwithstanding, the First Bulgarian State never developed indigenous history writing. Whatever historic curiosity was there, it was satisfied by those Byzantine chronicles that were available in Slavonic translations.

The inadequacy of Shakhmatov's ideas for explaining the genesis of chronicle writing soon became apparent to even his most loyal followers. They had to either accept that chronicles appeared as *deus ex machina*, a fully formed and highly developed genre, or to explore some other options. They did not, however, revert to the much-ridiculed idea of annalistic writing. Rather, they opted for a more ambitious and, for students of literature, certainly a more attractive alternative to the

¹⁸ The analogy is not accidental. In a way, the treatment of the *Primary Chronicle* follows the pattern established for Jordanes in historiography. In Walter Goffart's words, '[a]n observed tendency of research into Germanic antiquities has been to minimize the directly accessible texts, which are usually late in date, and to subordinate them to "the better antecedents" — the vanished tales or writings of earlier date whose vestiges are deemed to be incorporated, in debased form, in the materials that survive. Jordanes fits perfectly into this pattern of deprecating the time-bound text we have and preferring the lost precursor of which much may be imagined. If Jordanes's *Getica* is the "ruin" of the preferable Gothic history of Cassiodorus, every trait indicating conscious composition in Justinian's Constantinople may be disregarded, and whatever fragments seem attractive in a Germanistic perspective may be attributed to the Ravenna prototype. Imagination is best served by treating the *Getica* as a collection of extracts, and not as a planned literary design': Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 31.

narrative mode. In the late 1940s, Dmitry S. Likhachev suggested that the earliest attempt to write history was not a chronicle but rather a composition undivided into annual entries, termed by him ‘The Tale on the Spread of Christian Faith’. Later, it presumably served as the core for the chronicle and provided it with the story line and the basic facts. Others, like Mikhail N. Tikhomirov, suggested different plots for the ‘first history’: an account on the first princes termed by Tikhomirov as ‘The Tale on the Rus’ Princes’ or ‘The Tale on the Origin of Rus’. Still others, like Aleksey A. Gippius, extended the scope of this tale to include the conversion of Volodimer.

Yet the idea that the very first endeavours to record one’s past were made in the narrative mode and produced plot-based compositions is vulnerable. For one, it has no foundation whatsoever in the surviving texts, which is no accident. Narrative history telling, so easily accepted in modern practice as to appear naturally and spontaneously, is in fact the result of a long development. Such a literary convention presupposes a certain level of culture and highly sophisticated literary techniques not normally developed without external stimuli. It is hard to imagine how it could be invented without an engagement with traditions in which narrative history telling had been established for some time.

This consideration brings another problem. Unlike other emerging traditions in the peripheral regions of Christendom, Rus’ chronicle writing was separated from possible Byzantine (or Latin, for that matter) models by a linguistic barrier: their authors wrote in Old Church Slavonic. A consensus seems to have now been reached that the chroniclers knew no Byzantine Greek and thus were limited to only those texts that had been available in Old Church Slavonic translations. They were therefore unable to tap directly into the vast Greek historiography, either classical or Byzantine, and to pick a model at their own discretion, even if they had been equipped enough to appreciate it. True, even the Slavonic translations — tedious and obscure in terms of style as they are — would teach chroniclers some basics of the craft of story telling. Yet the idea that translations existed and were theoretically accessible does not necessarily mean they were indeed used by the very first local annalists in early Rus’. We know of the existence of translations only because they feature in the *Primary Chronicle*, which, as everyone agrees, is a late development. It would seem that chroniclers started to pay them attention only after the basic structure of the Rus’ chronicle had already been developed and firmly established as the only way of writing history. To interact in a sensible way with the Byzantine chronography and to use it for one’s own ends are signs of maturity and confidence, rather than of apprenticeship.

The Chronicle as Annals

It stands to reason that if history writing existed in newly converted Rus' — which lacked proper literature of its own — it would assume the form of what might be termed 'elementary notations'. Rather than expecting sophisticated *historia*-type compositions, we would be better off looking for some undemanding records whose aim was simply to set an event in time. Such 'elementary notations' appear in the form of a marginal note in a manuscript or a colophon to a text, or a series of dated notes adduced on the blank pages at the end of a book.¹⁹ These notations do not record the past, least of all some distant past. Their aim, rather, is to fix the present, so that it would not vanish from memory. If a fair number of such notations were made, they could constitute '*Kleinechronik*' — local or family — or cloister annals. Such jottings of historical character are well attested in later times, and it is perhaps only due to the poor survival rate of pre-Mongol manuscripts that we do not know of them from Kievan times.

But let us consider the following segment of the *Primary Chronicle*, which runs from AD 998 to 1014 and was made clearly 'visible' within the structure of the *Primary Chronicle* by flanking lengthy narrative pieces. The section has been discussed several times for various purposes, but still has not received the attention it really deserves.²⁰ The segment starts around the turn of the millennium and runs as follows:

Въ лѣтъ . ѿ [6506 (998)]
 Въ лѣтъ . ѿ [6507 (999)]
 Въ лѣтъ . ѿ [6508 (1000)] Престависа Мальфридъ . В се же лѣтъ престаивиса и
 Рогънѣдъ мѣти Ирослава .
 В лѣтъ . ѿ [6509 (1001)] Престависа Изаславъ ѿ Бращьславль . снъ
 Володимѣрь .
 Въ лѣтъ . ѿ [6510 (1002)]
 Въ лѣтъ . ѿ [6511 (1003)] Престависа Всеславъ . снъ Изаславль внукъ
 Вълодимѣрь .
 Въ лѣтъ . ѿ [6512 (1004)]
 Въ ⁴⁷ лѣтъ . ѿ [6513 (1005)]

¹⁹ Or even a dated inscription, of which many have survived on the walls of pre-Mongol churches. Some of them are obviously of a 'chronicle' nature, as an inscription on the death of Prince Jaroslav of Kiev or an inscription on the truce agreed between princes in St Sophia Cathedral in Kiev.

²⁰ I have dealt with this fragment elsewhere, see Oleksiy Tolochko, 'Kievan Rus' around the Year 1000', in *Europe around the Year 1000*, ed. by Przemysław Urbanczyk (Warsaw: DiG, 2001), pp. 123–40.

Въ лѣѣ . ѿс . ѿ . дѣ . [6514 (1006)]
 Въ лѣѣ . ѿс . ѿ . еѣ . [6515 (1007)] Принесени сѣи въ сѣю Бѣю ··
 Въ лѣѣ . ѿс . ѿ . сѣ . [6516 (1008)]
 Въ лѣѣ . ѿс . ѿ . зѣ . [6517 (1009)]
 Въ лѣѣ . ѿс . ѿ . иѣ . [6518 (1010)]
 Въ лѣѣ . ѿс . ѿ . ѿ . [6519 (1011)] Престависѣ цѣрци Володимера . Анна
 Въ лѣѣ . ѿс . ѿ . кѣ . [6520 (1012)]
 Въ лѣѣ . ѿс . ѿ . ка . [6521 (1013)]²¹

[In the year of 6506.

In the year of 6507.

In the year of 6508. Malfred died. In this year died also Rogned, Yaroslav's mother.

In the year of 6509. In this year died Izyaslav, son of Volodimer and father of Bryachislav.

In the year of 6510.

In the year of 6511. In this year died Vseslav, son of Izyaslav and grandson of Volodimer.

In the year of 6512.

In the year of 6513.

In the year of 6514.

In the year of 6515. The saints were brought to the Church of the Holy Virgin.

In the year of 6516.

In the year of 6517.

In the year of 6518.

In the year of 6519. The empress Anna, wife of Volodimer, passed away.

In the year of 6520.

In the year of 6521.]²²

The fragment has a clear structure of classical annals: a date and an attached brief notice; some years are left 'empty'. It is impossible to picture how this fragment could be obtained from a narrative composition. There is no story here to be told. The 'characters' have not acted before and will never appear in the story again. We would never learn, for example, just who Malfred was and why she (if it was indeed a woman) was so important as to have her death recorded in the royal chronicle. Similarly, we would never learn which saints — or rather which relics — were transferred to the Tithe Church. Even the personalities whose identities are known (as are the two wives of Volodimer, Rogned and Anna, or his son Izyaslav and grandson Vseslav) make their first and last appearance in our fragment (that is, beyond the legendary accounts). Actually, this is the only 'documentary' evidence for their mere existence. It is also hard to imagine how the events could have been recorded

²¹ *PSRL*, II, col. 114.

²² *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, ed. and trans. by Samuel Cross, Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, 12 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), p. 212.

generations after. On the contrary, the names and events could only have meant something to a contemporary, and the next generation was probably as lost as we are while deciphering them.

This fragment also demonstrates that the concept of the chronicle first emerging as an unbroken story, only to be later divided artificially into annual entries, is vulnerable. How would a later editor know the chronological distance between the events and hence the amount of 'empty' years needed? To set them apart, he would need another source with supposedly 'accurate' chronology, which means that an annalistic mode must have preceded narrative compositions after all.²³

The events like those presented above could only have been put into writing as they happened or shortly thereafter; and the nature of the recorded events is precisely what we should expect to find in the annals of a royal church: deaths in the royal family and major events in the church. Thus our segment apparently represents the vestiges of the earliest Rus' chronicle set in an annalistic mode.

While moving in the text of the *Primary Chronicle* from the entry of 1015 onwards, we discover a large narrative on the passions of St Boris and St Gleb inserted into the text of an earlier chronicle sometime in the second half of the eleventh century. By subtracting the fragments associated with this story as well as some other demonstrably later additions, we end up again with a continuous string of concise annals (mostly births and deaths in the royal family, wars, natural disasters, and the construction of churches) stretching well into the 1040s.

These annals appear to represent the earliest form in which the Rus' chronicle existed, continuously kept at either the princely court or (which is more probable) at the royal Tithe Church. The question, however, still remains: how could an annalistic chronicle have evolved in the absence of direct external influences?

In fact, there is a fairly good answer, since there existed a device producing under certain circumstances annals in diverse and seemingly unconnected traditions. In the mid-nineteenth century, the noted Russian Slavist Izmail Sreznevsky suggested on purely theoretical grounds that, given the chronicle's affinity with the genre of

²³ In fact, there is a documented sample of a continuous story later broken into yearly entries, the *Galician-Volhynian Chronicle* mentioned above. We have a fairly good idea of how the later editor went about this task and what sort of result he achieved. We know, for example, that in order to establish an absolute chronology, he would need another text with a chronological grid (an annalistic chronicle). We also know that for the sections of the text to which there was no parallel annalistic account, the editor had no idea of how big a time gap there might have been between the events: for him, they followed one right after another. Thus, he ended up with no 'empty' years in his chronology.

Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6805.	In the year of 6805.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6806. дмитрии родиса	In the year of 6806. Dmitry was born.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6807.	In the year of 6807.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6808.	In the year of 6808.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6809.	In the year of 6809.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6810. борисъ прест кназь	In the year of 6810. Prince Boris died.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6811. талаа зима	In the year of 6811. A warm winter.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6812. андрѣи кнѣзь пре ^ѣ	In the year of 6812. Prince Andrew passed away.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6813.	In the year of 6813.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6814.	In the year of 6814.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6815.	In the year of 6815.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6816.	In the year of 6816.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6817.	In the year of 6817.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6818.	In the year of 6818.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6819.	In the year of 6819.
Въ лѣтъ ^ѣ 6820. токhta оумре	In the year of 6820. Tokhta died.

²⁷ Mikhail I. Sukhomlinov, *Issledovania po drevnei russkoi literature* (St Petersburg, 1908), pp. 40–49.

Въ лѣ̃ 6821. избакъ сѣде	In the year of 6821. Uzbek sat [on the throne]
Въ лѣ̃ 6822.	In the year of 6822.
Въ лѣ̃ 6823. торжекъ взать	In the year of 6823. Torzhek was captured.
Въ лѣ̃ 6824. на ловоти стоади	In the year of 6824. On the river Lovot was a standoff.
Въ лѣ̃ 6825. кавадѣво	In the year of 6825. Kavadeevo.
Въ лѣ̃ 6826. михаило оубить	In the year of 6826. Michael is killed.
Въ лѣ̃ 6827. дорого моръ	In the year of 6827. High mortality.
Въ лѣ̃ 6828.	In the year of 6828.
Въ лѣ̃ 6829. слнѣ погнбло	In the year of 6829. The sun perished.
Въ лѣ̃ 6830.	In the year of 6830.
Въ лѣ̃ 6831. дмитрии сѣлъ	In the year of 6831. Dmitry sat [on the throne].
Въ лѣ̃ 6832.	In the year of 6832.
Въ лѣ̃ 6833.	In the year of 6833.
Въ лѣ̃ 6834. дмитрии оубить	In the year of 6834. Dmitry is killed.
Въ лѣ̃ 6835. шевкаль оубить	In the year of 6835. Shevkal is killed.
Въ лѣ̃ 6836.	In the year of 6836.
Въ лѣ̃ 6837.	In the year of 6837.

The resulting chronicle is strikingly similar to the fragment of the *Primary Chronicle* discussed above. It contains the comparable amount of 'empty' years and analogous events whose significance escapes us; it records deaths, battles, and natural phenomena. Translated into Latin, it would have been indistinguishable from Western annals.

The bond between the Paschal tables and the annals (or comparable works on history) is witnessed for various traditions.²⁸ As its very name suggests, the Byzantine *Paschal Chronicle*, for example, evolved from its anonymous author's deep interest in the chronology and calculations of Easter dates.²⁹ On the other fringe of Christendom, the Irish annals with their peculiar dating system of the calends of January and ferial (previously thought to have been an Irish invention) borrowed

²⁸ Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Early Irish Annals from Easter Tables: A Case Restated', *Peritia*, 2 (1983), 74–86. Cf. McKitterick, 'Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages', pp. 112–29; Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 97–100. She advocates the reverse relationship whereby the 'Paschal annals' borrow their notices from the actual annals. In her interpretation, she seems to proceed from the belief that for any given annalistic chronicle there must have been a Paschal table serving as a supplier of raw material. While this indeed may not be the case in every instance, the Paschal tables still are the best explanation for the emergence of the genre of the annals.

²⁹ Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 341.

their chronological apparatus from a particular kind of the Paschal tables, the fifth-century *lateralis* by Sulpicius Severus, followed by some of the early Irish churches.³⁰

Even from these few examples, it is obvious that the Paschal tables were an extremely powerful and efficient tool, allowing a historian to devise with relative ease an absolute chronology for his particular accounts. Yet their importance was not only technical, since they also provided a link between history and liturgy.

For a newly converted people, chronology must have been a discovery of immense proportions and significance. It was not only the skill of counting and playing with numbers. Chronology was important because it was Christian chronology. As such, it was loaded with deep religious meanings and a specific understanding of the world and its history. Christian chronology is the only 'full' one in the sense that it encompasses the totality of human experience, from the Creation to the Last Judgement. To provide a date for an event meant at the same time to acknowledge this stretch of time and to attest to a specifically Christian understanding of the past as well as the future. In Rosamond McKitterick's words, with chronology time became Christianized,³¹ and, at least initially, chronology might have been enjoyed for its own sake as a manifestation and confirmation of Christian self-awareness. A steady marching of 'God's years' in a chronicle was a visible manifestation of the Almighty's presence in the world reassured by an annually performed liturgical cycle.

Chronology is crucial for the Christian understanding of history.³² It is in relation to the linear time stretching from the Creation through the Incarnation to the Last Judgement that a particular event in local history receives its proper meaning. It is true that due to the influence of classical models, narrative histories survived in the Middle Ages. Eusebius of Caesarea was able to convert what had been viewed as an essentially pagan type of history writing into a respectable Christian enterprise. Yet it is also true that devoid of Christian chronology, narrative history writing lacked something very important from a Christian perspective, and the same Eusebius of Caesarea complemented his narrative *Church History* with the *Church Chronicle*, where primacy was given to chronology and not story telling.

³⁰ Daniel McCarthy, 'The Chronology and Sources of the Early Irish Annals', *Early Medieval Europe*, 10 (2001), 323–41.

³¹ McKitterick, 'Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages', pp. 104–06.

³² As Hans-Werner Goetz usefully reminds us, the strong link between Christian chronicles and chronology stems from the fact that time is God's creation and history is thus completely integrated into God's providence for human salvation; Hans-Werner Goetz, 'Constructing the Past: Religious Dimensions and Historical Consciousness in Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammurgensis ecclesiae pontificum*', in *Making of Christian Myths*, pp. 17–51 (pp. 23–24).

Early medieval historians, as well as their readers, felt somewhat uneasy when their story was not somehow related to universal chronology. A few instructive examples will do. Paul the Deacon dedicated his *Roman History* to Adalperga, daughter of the last Langobard king, Desiderius. In a dedicatory letter, Paul explains the origins of his work: he first suggested to Adalperga the reading of the *Roman History*, or *Breviary*, of Eutropius, but she found it too pagan. She then commissioned Paul to expand Eutropius with insertions from the Holy Scripture so as to give greater clarity to the author's original chronology: 'The obscurity that needed clarification was the equivalence of Eutropius's Roman dates to biblical ones. The "harmony" easily achieved by the intermittent insertion of lines from Jerome's *Chronicle*, is all that Paul deemed it necessary to supply.'³³ A bit earlier, Jordanes too thought it necessary to preface the *Getica* with the account of world history that placed his main story of the Goths into the framework of accepted Christian chronology.

We may conclude this section with the following set of questions, which by now seem rather rhetorical: is it possible to start writing history with no regard to chronology or history detached from any chronological framework? This, of course, is but one aspect of a larger question: what constituted history for a Christian monk, and to what extent was chronology an essential part of the enterprise? Was it possible (for this imagined monk) to view a story as *history* if no chronological markers were attached to it?

To the last question at least, the author of the *Primary Chronicle* gave a negative answer by offering at the very beginning of his work the following chronological computation, which linked the history of the Rus' princes with Christian chronology:

тѣмъ же и ѿсѣлъ почне^м. и числа положи^м. ꙗко ѿ Адама до потопа . лѣт^ѣ . ̅х̅в̅ . ̅с̅ . ̅м̅ . ̅в̅ . а ѿ потопа до Аврама . лѣт^ѣ . ̅х̅а̅ . ̅п̅ . ̅в̅ . ѿ Аврама до исхожения Моисѣва . лѣтѣ . ̅у̅ . ̅л̅ . ѿ исхожения Моисѣва . до Дѣда . лѣт^ѣ . ̅х̅ . а . ѿ Дѣда и до начала ц̅с̅тва Соломона . до плѣнениа Иер̅л̅мова . лѣт^ѣ . ̅у̅ . ̅м̅ . и . ѿ плѣнениа до Александра . лѣт^ѣ . ̅т̅ . ̅и̅ . ѿ Лександра д^о Х̅с̅ва рж̅ц̅в̅ . лѣт^ѣ . ̅т̅ . ̅л̅ . ̅г̅ . ѿ Х̅с̅ва рожд̅ства до Костантина . лѣт^ѣ . ̅т̅ . ̅и̅ . ѿ Костантина же до Михаила сего . лѣт^ѣ . ̅ф̅ . ̅м̅в̅ . ѿ п̅р̅ваго лѣта Махаила сего . до п̅р̅ваго лѣт^ѣ Улгова . Рускаго кн̅за . лѣт^ѣ . ̅к̅ѳ̅ . ѿ п̅р̅ваго лѣт^ѣ Улгова . понелѣже сѣде в Києвъ . до п̅р̅ваго лѣта Игорева . лѣт^ѣ . ̅ла̅ . ѿ п̅р̅ва^ѣ лѣт^ѣ Игорева . до п̅р̅ваго лѣт^ѣ Сtosлава . лѣт^ѣ . ̅л̅г̅ . ѿ п̅р̅ваго лѣта Сtosлава . до п̅р̅ваго лѣт^ѣ Ирополча . лѣт^ѣ . ̅ки̅ . Ирополкъ кнажи лѣт^ѣ . и . Володимеръ кнажи лѣт^ѣ . ̅л̅з̅ . Ирославъ¹⁷ кнажи лѣт^ѣ . ̅м̅ . Тѣмъ же ѿ см̅рти Сtosлава до см̅рти Ирослави . лѣт^ѣ . ̅п̅е̅ . ѿ см̅рти Ирослави . до см̅рти Ирополчи . лѣт^ѣ . ̅з̅ . Но мы на пре^{л̅}лежащее възвратимса . и скажемъ что са оудѣяло в лѣта си . ꙗко же преже почали бахомъ . п̅р̅вое лѣто Михаила . и по раду положимъ числа.³⁴

³³ Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 347–50.

³⁴ *PSRL*, II, col. 13.

[Hence we shall begin at this point and record the dates. Thus from Adam to the Flood, 2242 years elapsed; from the Flood to Abraham, 1082 years; from Abraham to the Mosaic Exodus, 430 years; from the Mosaic Exodus to David, 601 years; from David and the beginnings of the reign of Solomon to the captivity of Jerusalem, 448 years; from the captivity to Alexander, 318 years; from Alexander to the birth of Christ, 313 years; from the birth of Christ to Constantine, 318 years; and from Constantine to Michael, 542 years. Twenty-nine years passed between the first year of Michael's reign and the accession of Oleg, prince of Rus. From the accession of Oleg, when he took up his residence in Kiev, to the first year of Igor's principate, thirty-one years elapsed. Thirty-three years passed between Igor's accession and that of Sviatoslav. From the accession of Sviatoslav to that of Iaropolk, twenty-eight years passed. Iaropolk ruled eight years, Vladimir thirty-seven years, and Iaroslav forty years. Thus from the death of Sviatoslav to the death of Iaroslav eighty-five years elapsed, while sixty years separate the death of Iaroslav from that of Sviatopolk. But we shall now return to the subject [...] and we shall record the dates in order.]³⁵

Chronicle as an Offspring of Universal History

It is obvious that whatever its ultimate roots were, the *Primary Chronicle* is a historical composition much more complex than simple annals. It not only records the deeds of Christian princes of the Kievan house, but also inserts their stories into a larger framework of universal history, starting with the Flood and the story of Babel. In this component, the *Primary Chronicle* followed the universal Byzantine histories, with the chronicle of George Hamartolus being the principal source. It was also noted on numerous occasions that the role played by the universal histories in shaping the *Primary Chronicle's* text must have been so great that the very first dated accounts on the Rus' past now resemble but a gloss on Byzantine history. They are introduced by the standard formula 'in the days of the Emperor', while the reigns of several Byzantine emperors serve as anchor points for the chronicle's own chronological grid.

The dilemma of whether this 'Byzantine' component was simply a later adornment to an already existing set of annalistic entries or whether perhaps the chronicle's very origin was somehow linked to Byzantine chronography seems to have been a legitimate one for many commentators. In the 1920s, the great Russian student of Byzantine chronicles in Slavonic translations, Vasily Istrin, approached the problem of the origin of the *Primary Chronicle* from a Byzantine, as it were, perspective. It was clear for him that the idea of history writing did not occur naturally. As does any human invention, it migrates from culture to culture, and usually a compelling impulse is required to launch this innovative genre. Istrin postulated that the very

³⁵ *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, ed. by Cross, p. 144.

idea of writing history in Rus' emerged from the reading and annotating of Byzantine universal histories, and that the first attempts must have been glosses on local matters appended to these chronicles. At a certain point in the second half of the eleventh century, these glosses were extracted, put together in chronological order, and thus formed the core of what later became the *Primary Chronicle*.³⁶

Istrin, it turns out, had a great intuition. His hypothesis, however, seemed so speculative that its commentators had a hard time accepting it as a plausible scenario, especially since Istrin produced no source material to prove that such a transition from the universal Byzantine chronicles to a local historical tradition was indeed possible. This omission on Istrin's part was rather strange, for such proof did exist then and was known to him.

In the early fourteenth century, a Slavonic translation of the twelfth-century Byzantine chronicle of Constantine Manasses was produced in Bulgaria. Manasses's concise chronicle set in the so-called political metre enjoyed great popularity, which perhaps determined its choice as a translation. All the manuscripts of its Slavonic translation are of a Balkan provenance. The prominence for the translation was ensured by the lavishly illuminated Vatican codex produced perhaps for royal consumption.³⁷

For us, the most interesting feature of this Slavonic translation is its numerous glosses on local Bulgarian history appended to Manasses's original text. They are all quite visible, being located on the outer margins, while in the Vatican codex they are inserted into the main body of the text but visibly highlighted with red ink. Most glosses are rather substantial in terms of size, and they start with the formula 'in the days of the Emperor' familiar from the *Primary Chronicle*.

If we apply the procedure anticipated by Istrin's scenario — that is, if we extract glosses from the text and line them up in chronological order — we would end up with a decent Bulgarian chronicle covering principal events in the history of the country. The editors of the 1988 edition did just that and published the resulting chronicle in an appendix to the text.

Unfortunately, no similar East European manuscript exists, and those compilations from Byzantine chronography that do include Rus' events postdate the

³⁶ Vasily M. Istrin, *Zamechania o nachale russkoho letopisania* (Leningrad, 1924).

³⁷ The Vatican codex was published in facsimile as *Letopista na Konstantin Manasi: Fototipno izdanie na Vatikanskia prepis*, ed. by Ivan Dujcev (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1963). The Slavonic translation was most recently edited as *Srednebolgarskii perevod Khroniki Konstantina Manasii v slavianskikh literaturakh*, ed. by Dmitry Likhachev and Ivan Dujcev (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1988).

Primary Chronicle. Yet it turns out that the scenario suggested by Istrin was not entirely imaginary, and the much-abused argument of the poor survival ratio of the pre-Mongol manuscripts applies here with perhaps more legitimacy than elsewhere.

Hagiography as History

Apparently, it is not essential for a Christian to read his own local (to escape its definition as 'national') history. History in the Middle Ages, in the East and West, is ultimately about salvation. Not every author needed to be explicit on the subject, and yet each knew about history's finality and its exact date — the year 7000. Eschatological perspective is clearly evident in the *Primary Chronicle* and even referred to on several occasions. Since history is a revelation of God's will on a human level, a Christian mind is quite content with the reading of sacred history as told by the Bible or its numerous renderings in the form of universal chronicles. In other words, readings on the Old Testament Jews or the Acts of the Apostles would be no less 'one's own history' than the history of the Slavs.

What makes local history important is something that would suggest its special relation to sacred history: a relic of a prominent saint or, better yet, a story of the martyrdom of a local saint. It has been recently argued that, for the early period at least, the border between history and hagiography is permeable and easily crossed in both directions.³⁸ As Lars Boje Mortensen demonstrates, in realms without a previous older tradition to build upon, historical self-awareness may start with the production of lives of local martyred rulers (St Stephen, St Canute, and St Olav) and the first public festivities related to those saints.³⁹ Hagiography thus appears to have been the initial form of literature on the local past, only later followed by 'proper' historical works.

Chronologically, the first and by far most important saints of Rus' were Boris and Gleb — sons of Prince Volodimer the Great — martyred in 1015. Two principal versions of their lives were produced following their martyrdom: the so-called *Anonymous Tale* and the *Vita and Passions* by Nestor, the monk of the Caves

³⁸ Patrick Geary, 'Reflections on the Historiography and the Holy: Center and Periphery', in *Making of Christian Myths*, pp. 323–30 (p. 324).

³⁹ Lars Boje Mortensen, 'Sanctified Beginnings and Mythopoetic Moments: The First Wave of Writing on the Past in Norway, Denmark, and Hungary, c. 1000–1230', in *Making of Christian Myths*, pp. 247–69.

Monastery.⁴⁰ The story of the two young princes treacherously murdered by their elder brother Sviatopolk in a struggle for princely succession had great appeal both in terms of a general Christian sentiment and also within the dynastic ideology of kinship-based rulership. The exact date of their canonization is not known, and scholarly opinions vary considerably. While some maintain that it happened rather late, in 1072 when their relics were installed into a new church in Vyshgorod, others would allow some time for a local veneration to build up, thus moving its origins to the 1030–50s.

The two *vitae* tell the story in great detail by far exceeding the ‘normal’ standard expected in hagiography. Unfortunately, their exact dating is vague and is still a matter of controversy. Yet chances are that these two (or the *Anonymous Tale* at least) were the first accounts of the Rus’ past set in a narrative mode. For the chronicle, the story of the two martyred princes also proved tremendously important. The account of their passions — the most detailed and lengthy narrative in its ‘historical’ part — was incorporated into the existing chronicle and now features as the entry of 1015. It is assumed that the variant that eventually found its way into the chronicle is the oldest one prepared in anticipation of the times when canonization becomes possible and formally recognized by church officials. Hagiography, with its established literary canon and a set of common narrative devices, appears to have been a suitable training ground for the emerging historical literature in a narrative mode.

The two *vitae* are mirrored by the two important events in the history of the ruling dynasty and the Church: the translation of the saints’ relics in 1072 and again in 1115. Both are described minutely in the chronicle; and, not incidentally, the latter instance was the event with which the author of the *Primary Chronicle* symbolically chose to end, marking the exact centenary since the martyrdom of the holy brothers. It thus appears that according to the author’s vision, the history of Christian Rus’ and its Christian dynasty stretched from the martyrdom to the final transmission of the saints’ relics in a church specially built for this occasion.

⁴⁰ For the European context of the saints’ cult, see Gabor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. by Éva Pálmai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 108–13. For the English translation of the *vitae*, see *The Hagiography of Kievan Rus’*, trans. by Paul Hollingsworth, Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature: English Translations, 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

Rhetoric as History

Yet it seems that the very first surviving composition that made explicit references to the Rus' past and offered an integral vision of its history, as well as its place within the history of Christendom, was not a saint's life but a sermon. Its author, Ilarion, is a notable figure: he was a preacher at the courtly church of the Holy Apostles and was appointed by Prince Jaroslav ('the Wise') in 1051 to the metropolitan see of Kiev, the first and (for the next century) only native to hold the office. Ilarion was an expert writer and an accomplished theologian. Sometime in the late 1040s, most probably in the newly built St Sophia Cathedral of Kiev, he delivered before the entire princely family what became known as the *Sermon on Law and Grace*, an Easter homily. This is the earliest known attempt to explain to the ruling dynasty their once-pagan past, their concomitant Christian present, the difference between the two, and the way of their reconciliation.

The *Sermon on Law and Grace* is an immensely complex piece of theology, betraying an accomplished — even by Byzantine standards — exegete in its author.⁴¹ It is believed that the homily was occasioned by the rather rare coincidence of two feasts, Easter and Annunciation. For his theme, therefore, Ilarion chose the problem of correlation between God's Law (equated with the Old Testament) and Christ's Grace (equated with the New Testament), and the relation of the Old Testament history to Christians.

Simplifying considerably, it may be said that Ilarion develops his argument through a succession of oppositions: the law was first, and the grace came next. The law equals the Old Testament, the grace the Gospels. Likewise, the Jews of the Old Testament were first, and then came those blessed with the grace of the New Testament. The pagans were first, and then came the Christians. But there were also old, as it were, Christians, while 'new' Christians appeared later. In each pair, the second element is superior to the first in value and is a fulfilment of the first. Yet the first component is not bad either, for it prepares a higher state and any advance is unattainable without it.

Having sufficiently prepared his audience, Ilarion then switches to the local dynasty and their realm. Of course, the bulk of the praise goes to Prince Volodimer, who baptized Rus' and thus brought God's grace upon it. Yet not unexpectedly, Ilarion also reserves some very nice words for the pagan ancestors of the concurrent

⁴¹ On the *Sermon on Law and Grace*, as well as for the translation of the text, see *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus'*, trans. by Simon Franklin, Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature: English Translations, 5 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

prince, Jaroslav. Before the conversion, Volodimer was, of course, pagan. So was the current prince, Jaroslav, the addressee of the sermon. It is only his sons who represent the first generation born into the Christian faith. This makes the ruling family a replica of Ilarion's larger themes: the law and grace. Only the younger ones were born Christians — does that make their ancestors' lives worthless? It is true that Rus' embraced Christianity late, but does this make it somehow inferior and its previous past of no value? To cut off their pre-Christian ancestors would have been impossible for the Rus' princes, because their only legitimacy lay in kinship and their proximity to the traditional ruling clan.

Ilarion's dialectics rescue him from a delicate situation. His previous argument mirrors the role of the Old Testament Jews with that of the recent pagans: both preceded the Christians and also made them possible. Ilarion can now praise the pagan ancestors of the ruling prince without any reservation. Volodimer was a grandson of 'old' Igor and a son of the famous Sviatoslav, whose fame reached many countries. Pagan princes are not a liability, but worthy rulers well known beyond their realm. They created a renowned country heard of 'in all the four ends of the world'. Without them there would not have been Volodimer, who converted Rus' to Christianity, and the Christian dynasty listening to the Easter sermon. So, somehow, even though these ancient rulers were pagan, they are not damned and they are definitely not to be ashamed of for Jaroslav. The universal Christian history can, after all, redeem the pagans.

Conclusion

Abbot Sylvester gave the *Primary Chronicle* the title *Povest' vremnykh let*. All the sophisticated interpretations of its meaning notwithstanding,⁴² the simplest and most literal one seems to be the best: 'the tale [consisting] of the numbered years'. *Vremennoje leto* has a parallel in *vremennoje chislo* ('an annal') in the Bulgarian translation of the *Chronicle* of Constantine Manasses.⁴³ Such a title would be consistent with Sylvester's own description of his endeavour: 'по раду положити числа' ('to line up the numbered years'), as well as the generic name for a chronicle,

⁴² See most recently Horace Lunt, 'Povest' vremennykh let', *Paleoslavica*, 5 (1997), 317–26; and Aleksey Gippius, "Povest' vremennykh let": o vozmozhnom proiskhozhdenii i znachenii nazvanii, in *Iz istorii russkoj kultury*, vol. 1: *Drevniaja Rus'* (Moscow: Jazyki slavianskoj kultury, 2000), pp. 440–60.

⁴³ *Srednebolgarskij perevod*, ed. by Likhachev and Dujcev, p. 148.

‘лѣтописецъ’ (literally, the annals). This suggests that chronology was at the core of Abbot Sylvester’s understanding of history writing and that he saw himself as a successor of the annalistic tradition maintained in Kiev since the early decades of the eleventh century. Yet in that very same century the historical past was described in other literary forms, including hagiography and sermons. By the early twelfth century, all those forms had converged to produce the East European chronicle as we know it now, of which the *Primary Chronicle* was the first specimen.

PAGAN PAST AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY IN THE *PRIMARY CHRONICLE*

Donald Ostrowski

The *Povest' vremennykh let* (*Tale of Bygone Years*, otherwise popularly known as the *Primary Chronicle*) is an early twelfth-century Rus' chronicle. It provides a clerical chronicler's virtual past exposition of the early Rus' principalities.¹ Insofar as a chronicler can be understood to be a historian, I took as my task in this chapter to identify what that virtual past was in the chronicler's mind in regard to pagans and in regard to Rus' Christianity's relationship to them. In the process, I found two interlocking emplotments, each representing the outlook of a different narrator.

The *Primary Chronicle* was compiled from various earlier chronicles, treaties, eyewitness accounts, quotations from the Bible, and, in parts, the chronicler's own observations. The chronicler may have incorporated, to an extent, the attitudes of previous chroniclers and authors of sources used with or without editing them to conform to his own views. With that in mind, we can tentatively determine two virtual past attitudes, both of which involve the relationship of Rus' Christianity to paganism. These two attitudes are represented by differing but complementary archetypal emplotments of the narrative. Thus, one emplotment can be detected from the beginning of the narrative (following the biblical Flood) through the reign of Jaroslav (d. 1054) including the appointment of Ilarion as metropolitan of Rus' *s.a.* 1051 but without the 'Tale of the Founding of the Caves Monastery'. The author of this first emplotment we can call 'Narrator A'. Another emplotment begins with placing the 'Tale of the Founding of the Caves Monastery' under 1051,

¹ One can define the 'virtual past' as 'the construct in the mind of the historian'. See Donald Ostrowski, 'The Historian and the Virtual Past', *The Historian*, 51 (1989), 201–20 (p. 201).

then continues from 1054 to the end of the narrative (*s.a.* 1114). The author of this second emplotment we can call 'Narrator B'. In both emplotments, the pagan Other is embraced as a necessary component of the narrative. Thus, neither of the strategies of 'early Christian narratives written on the north-eastern periphery' as described in the 'Introduction' to this volume (i.e. 'glorious Christian present replacing the ignominious heathen past' and 'to relegate the "pagan" period to a level of no historical importance or to omit it altogether')² is adopted by either of the narrators in the *Primary Chronicle*. To be sure, they consider the Christian period of the Rus' to be superior to its pagan period, as they do Christianity to paganism, but one finds little in the manner of denigration or demonizing of the pagan period. Various scholarly views have been expressed regarding when and by whom the *Primary Chronicle* was written. Awareness of these various views helps us to understand better the characteristics and concerns of the compiler/narrator, but first we should look at the manuscript evidence.

Manuscript Branches of the Primary Chronicle

The earliest extant manuscript copy of the *Primary Chronicle* dates to 1377 (the Laurentian copy). Other manuscript copies that attest to the archetype are the Hypatian (*c.* 1425), Radziwiłł (1490s), Academy (end of 15th c.), and Khlebnikov (16th c.). We also have the pages of a typeset edition of the first few folios (up to the entry for 906) of another manuscript, the Trinity, which was being prepared for publication when the manuscript was lost in the Moscow fire of 1812.³ Other chronicle copies that contain all or part of the *Primary Chronicle* derive from these six manuscript witnesses. Their readings group them into two branches: the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch and the Laurentian-Trinity-Radziwiłł-Academy branch, which further subdivides into the Laurentian-Trinity sub-branch and the Radziwiłł-Academy sub-branch. By working back through the readings attested to by the sub-branches and branches, one can reconstruct the archetype. In addition, three copies (the Commission, Novgorod-Academy, and Tolstoi) of the *First Novgorod Chronicle* of the *Younger Redaction* contain text of the *Primary Chronicle* that derives from the hyparchetype of the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch.⁴ Thus, its

² See Ildar Garipzanov's Introduction to this volume, pp. 1–2.

³ M. D. Priselkov, *Troitskaia letopis': Rekonstruktsiia teksta* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1950), pp. 51–65.

⁴ On the *First Novgorod Chronicle*, see the following chapter by Timofey Guimon.

readings are useful for determining the textual archetype of the *Primary Chronicle* only when they agree with Laurentian-Trinity-Radziwiłł-Academy branch against the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch.⁵

The last entry in the Laurentian-Trinity-Radziwiłł-Academy branch of the *Primary Chronicle* is *s.a.* 1110, but in that entry we find reference to an event that occurred 'in the following year' (i.e. 1111). The Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch describes fully that subsequent event. It is likely that the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch better represents the conclusion of the *Primary Chronicle* and that, as Cross suggested, that ending was 'also present in the prototype of the Laurentian redaction, but that several leaves were lost at the conclusion, while the colophon of Sylvester was on a separate leaf or on the binding, and was thus preserved'.⁶ Further modifications occurred in the Hypatian-Khlebnikov line between the first copying of its hyparchetype (probably by 1118) and the time of the earliest extant copy (c. 1425).

The standard view, which is based on A. A. Shakhmatov's conjectures, sees three redactions of the *Primary Chronicle* being composed between 1111 and 1118⁷ and a pre-*Primary Chronicle* redaction, the 'Initial Compilation' (*Nachal'nyi svod*), being composed between 1093 and 1096.⁸ Cross questioned that intense redaction

⁵ See Donald Ostrowski, 'Introduction', in *PVL*, I, pp. xvii–lxxiii (pp. xxxviii–xlv); and Donald Ostrowski, 'Scribal Practices and Copying Probabilities in the Transmission of the Text of the *Povest' vremennykh let*', *Palaeoslavica*, 13. 2 (2005), 48–77 (pp. 51–58).

⁶ Samuel Hazzard Cross, 'Introduction', in *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, trans. and ed. Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1953), p. 284, n. 387. Although Cross seems to have ascribed to the lost folia idea, he ended his translation with the ending and colophon found in the Laurentian-Trinity-Radziwiłł-Academy branch. Previously I accepted the view that the entry for 1110 was the end of the *Primary Chronicle*, but as a result of the research for this chapter, I have come to a different conclusion. Timberlake has suggested that Sylvester may have made a conscious decision to omit certain passages in the *Primary Chronicle*. Alan Timberlake, 'Redactions of the Primary Chronicle', *Russkii iazyk v nauchnom osveshchenii*, 1 (2001), 196–218 (p. 201).

⁷ For the first redaction, Shakhmatov proposed variously 1111 (A. A. Shakhmatov, *Povest' vremennykh let. Vvodnaia chast': Tekst. Primechaniia* (Petrograd: A. V. Orlov, 1916), pp. xv and xviii), 1112 (Shakhmatov, *Povest' vremennykh let*, pp. xxi and xxxvi), and 1113 (Aleksandr A. Shakhmatov, *Razyskaniia o drevneishikh russkikh letopisnykh svodakh* (St Petersburg: M. A. Aleksandrov, 1908), p. 2) as composition dates. For the second redaction, he proposed 1116 and for the third, 1118.

⁸ A. A. Shakhmatov, 'Predislovie k Nachal'nomu Kievskomu svodu i Nestorova letopis', *Izvestiia Otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk*, 13. 1 (1908), 213–70 (p. 226); cf. Shakhmatov, *Razyskaniia*, p. 11; and Shakhmatov, *Povest' vremennykh let*, p. xxiii: 'around 1095'.

activity in a short period of time.⁹ But it may not have been an intense creation of three *Primary Chronicle* redactions in relatively rapid succession. Instead, one must give serious consideration to Alan Timberlake's proposal that the Laurentian and Hypatian branches represent traditions rather than redactions.¹⁰ The *Primary Chronicle* was probably composed sometime between 1114 and 1116, when Sylvester made his copy. The most likely place of its composition was in the Kievan Caves Monastery.¹¹ The chronicler displays concern about the Polovtsians, especially in regard to the safety of the Caves Monastery. From this concern and his continual return to matters related to that monastery,¹² one can surmise that the chronicler was a monk at the Caves Monastery. Then it was copied at least twice, once in 1116 by Hegumen Sylvester in St Michael's Monastery in Vyduhichi, and a second time by an unknown copyist of the hyparchetype of the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch probably also in the Caves Monastery by 1118. Thus, two copies, each leading to a different developmental line, were made of the *Primary Chronicle* within two to four years of its initial composition. Neither of these copyings created what we can call a different redaction since there is insufficient evidence to justify the claim of an intentional, systematic effort to redact the chronicle in either copying.

Authorship of the Primary Chronicle

The *Primary Chronicle* begins with this statement:

⁹ Cross, 'Introduction', p. 15: 'it would appear something of a *tour de force* to explain this appearance of three versions of the same monument within seven years'.

¹⁰ Timberlake, 'Redactions of the Primary Chronicle', pp. 201–03.

¹¹ Cf. the preceding chapter by Oleksiy Tolochko.

¹² There are at least seventeen separate mentions of the Caves Monastery or one of its monks in the narrative between 1051 and 1111: *PVL*, 155,29–160,24 (1051) description of its founding; 181,23 (1072) Feodosii as hegumen of; 183,16 (1073) founding of Caves Church; 183,21 (1074) passing of Hegumen Feodosii; 198,16 (1075) completion of Caves Church; 207,23 (1088) passing of Hegumen Nikon; 207,25 (1089) consecration of Caves Church; 226,23–226,27 (1094) Bishop Stefan, former hegumen of the monastery, died; 232,16 (1096) Polovtsian attack on the monastery; 281,14 (1106) Elder Ian's tomb in the monastery's chapel; 282,15 (1107) brethren of monastery rejoice because Polovtsian siege raised; 283,8 (1108) refectory of monastery completed; 283,12 (1108) Feodosii's name inscribed in synodikon; 283,22 (1108) mention of Stefan, former hegumen of the monastery; 283,25 (1109) body of Eupraksia Vsevolodovna laid in monastery; 284,6 (1110) fiery pillar over monastery; Hypatian 268,20–24 (1111) reference to fiery pillar seen previous year.

Повѣсть временныхъ лѣтъ чьрноризца Феодосіева манастиря печерьскаго, отъкуду
 есть пошла русьская земля и кѣто въ неи почаль пръвѣ кѣняжити, и отъкуду
 Русьская земля стала есть. (0,1–0,4)¹³

[The Tale of bygone years of a monk of Feodosii's Caves Monastery, from where came the
 Rus' land and who in it first began to rule, and from where the Rus' land began.]

Two points can be drawn from this introduction: (1) what ensues was intended as a narrative, a tale (*povest'*) explaining the origins and development of the Rus' land; and (2) the author of this narrative was a monk of the Kievan Caves Monastery.

A possible contradiction to authorship claimed in the introduction occurs in a colophon extant in the Laurentian-Trinity-Radziwiłł-Academy branch, which states that Sylvester (*Sil'vestr*), the hegumen of St Michael's Monastery, wrote or copied the text and asks to be remembered in people's prayers:

Игумень Силвестръ святаго Михаила написахъ кѣнигы си Лѣтописць, надѣя ся отъ
 Бога милость прияти, при кѣнязи Володимирѣ, кѣнящую ему Кыевъ, а мнѣ
 игуменящую у святаго Михаила въ 6624, индикта 9 лѣта; и иже чѣтеть кѣнигы сия, тѣ
 буди ми въ молитвахъ. (286,1–286,7)¹⁴

¹³ All citations from the *Primary Chronicle*, as are all the column and line numbers, are given according to *PVL*. These column and line numbers are based, in turn, on the column and line division in E. F. Karskii's 1926 edition of the Laurentian Chronicle for the Full Collection of Russian Chronicles series, *PSRL*, I (1926). Karskii's column numbers are indicated in Cross's translation of the *Primary Chronicle* into English and in Ludolf Müller's translation of the *Primary Chronicle* into German. Cross's translation first appeared in print in 1930: Samuel H. Cross, 'The Russian Primary Chronicle', *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, 12 (1930), 75–320. The translation was reissued by Sherbowitz-Wetzor in 1953 with additional notes by Cross as *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*. Müller's translation appears as the last volume of a four-volume manual for the *Primary Chronicle*. *Die Nestorchronik*, trans. by Ludolf Müller, in *Handbuch zur Nestorchronik*, ed. by Ludolf Müller, 4 vols (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1977–2001), vol. IV. See Ludolf Müller, 'Die Überschrift de "Povest' vremennych let"', *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury*, 55 (2004), 3–8. For an analysis of Müller's translation, see Aleksei Gippius, 'O kritike teksta i novom perevode-rekonstruktsii "Povesti vremennykh let"', *Russian Linguistics*, 26 (2002), 63–126. For Müller's response, see Ludolf Müller, 'K kritike teksta, k tekstu i perevodu Povesti vremennykh let', *Russian Linguistics*, 30 (2006), 401–36. For a response to both articles, see Donald Ostrowski, 'The Načal'nyj Svod Theory and the *Povest' vremennykh let*', *Russian Linguistics*, 31 (2007), 269–308. For a discussion of the title of the *Primary Chronicle*, see Donald Ostrowski, 'The Text of the *Povest' vremennykh let*: Some Theoretical Considerations', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 5 (1981), 28–29; Ostrowski, 'Introduction', pp. lx–lxi; and Donald Ostrowski, 'The Title of the *Povest' vremennykh let* Redux', *Ruthenica*, 6 (2007), 316–21.

¹⁴ Priselkov proposed in his reconstruction that the wording of this colophon also appeared in the Trinity copy. Priselkov, *Troitskaia letopis'*, p. 205.

[Hegumen Sylvester of Saint Michael's wrote down this chronicle book, hoping to receive mercy from God, during the time of Prince Volodimer who reigns in Kiev, and to me hegumen at Saint Michael's in 1116, in the ninth year of the indiction; may whosoever reads this book remember me in prayers.]

The ambiguity comes with the word 'написахъ', which can be either 'I wrote' or 'I copied' (literally, 'wrote down'). Previously, as Oleksiy Tolochko does in this volume, I accepted the former meaning and attributed the authorship of the *Primary Chronicle* to Sylvester.¹⁵ If, however, we take the second meaning of 'написати' and accept that Sylvester copied an already existing text, then we have to look elsewhere for the author/compiler. Since the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch does not derive from the Sylvestrian version (in which case, if it did, one could argue the colophon was omitted in it), but derives from an exemplar earlier than the Sylvestrian, one has to conclude that Sylvester copied from an exemplar — the archetype of the *Primary Chronicle* — the same exemplar from which the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch derives.

The Khlebnikov manuscript claims that the monk Nestor, who is also credited with writing *The Tale and Passion and Eulogy to the Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb* (*Skazanie i strast' i pokhvala sviatuiu mucheniku Borisa i Gleba*) and the *Life of the Venerable Feodosii* (*Zhitie sviatogo Feodosiia*), was the author of the *Primary Chronicle*. A number of scholars, including Shakhmatov, have accepted this statement as correct.¹⁶ Although that attribution would provide a name for the monk of the Caves Monastery otherwise unidentified in the title of the other five main manuscript witnesses of the *Primary Chronicle*, accepting it is problematic. Stem-matics requires that we reject any *lectiones singulares* unless we have positive justification to accept it. Here not only is that positive justification absent, we have positive justification not to accept it. As Cross has pointed out, other texts attributed to Nestor differ in style from the *Primary Chronicle* and provide details that contradict those of the *Primary Chronicle*.¹⁷ The nature of the stylistic differences and contradictory details makes it highly unlikely the Nestor who is credited with composing the *Tale of Boris and Gleb* or the *Life of Feodosii* was the author/compiler of the *Primary Chronicle*. It is probable that the inclusion of the name *Nestor* in the Khlebnikov copy was merely a conjecture on the part of the manuscript's

¹⁵ Ostrowski, 'Introduction', p. xvii.

¹⁶ Shakhmatov, *Razyskanie*, p. 2; and L. V. Milov and others, 'Kto byl avtorom "Povesti vremennykh let"?', in *Ot Nestora do Fonvizina: Novye metody opredeleniia avtorstva*, ed. by L. V. Milov (Moscow: Progress, 1994), pp. 40–69.

¹⁷ Cross, 'Introduction', pp. 6–11.

sixteenth-century scribe as to which monk of the Caves Monastery was the author of the *Primary Chronicle*.

Another proposal was made in 1954 by the French scholar André Vaillant that a certain Vasilii, who is mentioned in the text, was the author of the *Primary Chronicle*. Vaillant identified Vasilii with Hegumen Sylvester and saw him as being responsible for the narrative section from 1051 to 1110.¹⁸ The idea that Vasilii was the author was renewed apparently independently in 2003 by the Russian scholar V. N. Rusinov. Unlike Vaillant, he did not identify Vasilii with Sylvester, but he did see Vasilii as responsible for the narrative from 1051 to 1117.¹⁹ A. A. Gippius expressed objections to this proposed attribution,²⁰ so we need to look closer at the claim. Rusinov derived his evidence for the attribution from fifty-four passages in the text,²¹ but two are of particular significance for our concerns. First, *s.a.* 1051, in the description of the founding of the Kievan Caves Monastery, the narrator uses the first person but does not identify himself by name:

Феодосиеви же живушю въ манастири, [...] къ нему же и азъ придохъ, худыи и недостойныи рабъ, и приять мя, лѣтъ ми сущю 17 отъ роженія моего. Се же написахъ и положихъ, въ кое лѣто почаль быти манастирь, и чѣто ради зоветь ся Печерьскыи. (160,16–160,24)

[While Feodosii lived in the monastery, [...] I, a poor and unworthy servant, came to him, and he accepted me in my seventeenth year. Hence I wrote down and certified in what year the monastery was founded and for what reason it is called 'Caves'.]

Feodosii died in the year 1074, so the narrator had to be born before 1057 (1074 – 17 = 1057). Second, *s.a.* 1097, the narrator identifies himself by name,

¹⁸ André Vaillant, 'La Chronique de Kiev et son auteur', *Prilozi za Knjizhevost, jezik istorij i folklor*, 20 (1954), 169–83 (pp. 178–83).

¹⁹ V. N. Rusinov, 'Letopisnye stat'i 1051–1117 gg. v sviazi s problemoi avtorstva i redaktsii "Povesti vremennykh let"', *Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo universiteta im. N. I. Lobachevskogo. Seriya Istoriia*, 1. 2 (2003), 111–47.

²⁰ A. A. Gippius, 'K voprosu o redaktsiakh Povesti vremennykh let. I', *Slavianovedenie*, 2007.5, 20–44 (pp. 20–22); and A. A. Gippius, 'K voprosu o redaktsiakh Povesti vremennykh let. II', *Slavianovedenie*, 2008.2, 3–24 (p. 9).

²¹ Rusinov identifies nine passages in the narrative between 1051 and 1114 where the narrator refers to himself in the first person, fourteen passages between 1068 and 1115 that refer to personal Christian characteristics, seventeen passages between 1051 and 1114 where the course of the narrative is referred to, seven passages between 1051 and 1115 where he refers to the time of the chronicler, and seven passages between 1068 and 1111 where the narrative describes military clashes between the Rus' and the Polovtsians. Rusinov, 'Letopisnye stat'i', pp. 123–38.

и мѣнѣ ту сущю, въ Володимири, въ едину ношъ присъла по мя кѣнязь Давыдъ. И приидохъ къ нему, и посадивъ мя и рече ми: '[...] Да се, Василю, шлюю тя, иди къ Василькови, съ сима отрокома.' (265,7–265,17)

[while I was myself there at Volodimir [-Volynsk], Prince David [Igor'evich] sent for me during a certain evening. I came to him, and after seating me, he said to me, '[...] I choose you, Vasilii, as my messenger. Go to your namesake Vasil'ko.']

Shakhmatov proposed that the *Primary Chronicle* author/compiler was quoting a priest named Vasilii in this passage or had incorporated Vasilii's written account of the event.²² But there is no marker or indicator that another person is being quoted as elsewhere in the text when the narrator quotes other eyewitness accounts, such as those of Ian, son of Vyshata (1071 (175,17–175,19)) and Giuriata Rogovich of Novgorod (1096 (234,23–234,25)). One needs to seriously consider the likelihood that when the narrator writes, 'while I was myself there at Volodimir' and 'I entered his presence', he is referring to himself. The subsequent words of Prince David, 'I choose you, Vasilii, as my messenger', would seem to be a clear and direct identification of the name of the monk who is our Narrator B, but he is probably not the 'monk of Feodosii's Caves Monastery' referred to in the introduction to the text.

The Narrative Evidence

The narrative begins after the biblical Flood with the dividing up of the earth among Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah. This first part of the *Primary Chronicle* is without year markers (1,2–17,24) and contains two lengthy excerpts from the Greek *Chronicle* of George Hamartolus.²³ In the annalistic part of the *Primary Chronicle* (i.e. entries arranged according to years), four shorter excerpts from the *Chronicle* of Hamartolus appear.²⁴

²² A. A. Shakhmatov, "Povest' vremennykh let" i ee istochniki', *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury*, 4 (1940), 9–150 (pp. 27–28); Shakhmatov, *Povest' vremennykh let*, pp. xxxi–xxxvi.

²³ For the standard edition of the translation of the *Chronicle* of George Hamartolus into Slavonic, see V. M. Istrin, *Knigy vremeni'nyia i obraznyia Georgiia mnika: Khronika Georgiia Amartola v drevnem slavianorusskom perevode*, 3 vols (Petrograd: Izdatel'stvo Otdeleniia Russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Rossiiskogo Akademii nauk, 1920–30), vol. I [hereafter *GA*]. The excerpt that appears in *PVL*, 1,2–3,15 corresponds to *GA* 58.20/25–59.20, and the excerpt in *PVL*, 14,15–16,11 corresponds to *GA* 49.25–50.22.

²⁴ These are *PVL*, 21,12–22,2/3 = *GA* 511.7–511.21; *PVL*, 29,7–29,11 = *GA* 530.4–530.7; *PVL*, 32,22–32,23 = *GA* 541.12; *PVL*, 39,18–42,2 = *GA* 305.9–306.23.

The annalistic part of his narrative begins *s.a.* 852, which the chronicler considered to be the beginning of the reign of the Byzantine emperor Michael. He starts with Michael, he says, because the Rus' are first mentioned 'in the Greek Chronicle' ('въ лѣтописании Гръцьскомъ') during his reign when they attacked Constantinople (17,25–17,29). Here the chronicler made a mistake of ten years in that Michael began his reign in 842, not 852.²⁵ V. M. Istrin and Timberlake used the accompanying princely chronology, which ends with the death of Sviatopolk Iziaslavich (1113), in conjunction with references to the death of David Igor'evich (1112) in the entries for 1097 and 1100, as evidence that the 'editorial event', as Timberlake calls it, that was the compilation of the *Primary Chronicle* occurred not earlier than 1113.²⁶ The original version of the chronology, however, probably ended with the death of Jaroslav (1054):

а отъ първаго лѣта Святославля до първаго лѣта Яропѣлча лѣтъ 28. Яропѣлкѣ кнѣжи лѣтъ 8; а Володимерѣ кнѣжи лѣтъ 37; а Ярославѣ кнѣжи лѣтъ 40. Тѣмъ же отъ смърти Святославля до смърти Ярославля лѣтъ 85. (18,16–18,20)

[From the first year of Sviatoslav to the first year of Jaropolk, twenty-eight years [passed]. Jaropolk ruled eight years, Volodimer ruled thirty-seven years, and Jaroslav ruled forty years. Thus, from the death of Sviatoslav to the death of Jaroslav eighty-five years [passed].]

The phrase that follows, 'while from the death of Jaroslav to the death of Sviatopolk sixty years [passed]' ('а отъ смърти Ярославля до смърти Сятопѣлчи лѣтъ 60'; 18,20–18,21) was most likely added later since Sviatopolk Iziaslavich's name does

²⁵ Shakhmatov provided an explanation that indicates where the calculation that appears in the *Primary Chronicle* went astray. A. A. Shakhmatov, 'Iskhodnaia tochka letochisleniia *Povesti vremennykh let*', *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, 310 (1897), 217–22. Cf. Cross, 'Introduction', p. 30.

²⁶ V. M. Istrin, 'Zamechaniia o nachale russkogo letopisaniia: Po povodu issledovaniia A. A. Shakhmatova v oblasti drevnerusskoi letopisi', *Izvestiia Otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovenosti Rossiiskoi akademii nauk*, 27 (1922 [1924]), 207–51 (p. 220): 'after 1112; probably [...] before the death of Sviatopolk (1113)'; and Timberlake, 'Redactions of the Primary Chronicle', pp. 201–03. Priselkov first dated the composition of *Primary Chronicle* to the period 1114–16, then to 1113. See M. D. Priselkov, *Nestor letopisets: Opyt istoriko-literaturnoi kharakteristiki* (Petrograd: Brokgauz-Efron, 1923), p. 89; and M. D. Priselkov, *Istoriia russkogo letopisaniia XI–XV vv.* (Leningrad: Leningradskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1940), p. 16. Cherepnin proposed 1115 when the relics of Boris and Gleb were translated. L. V. Cherepnin, 'Poves' vremennykh let, ee redaktsii i predshestvuiushchie ei letopisnye svody', *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 25 (1948), 293–333 (p. 309). Aleshkovskii also proposed 1115 as the year of composition of the *Primary Chronicle*. M. Kh. Aleshkovskii, 'Pervaia redaktsiia *Povesti vremennykh let*', in *Arkheograficheskii ezhegodnik za 1967 g.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), pp. 13–40.

not appear in the earlier part of the chronology. This circumstance suggests two narrators at work here: Narrator A, who wrote the original form of the chronology, and Narrator B, who added the last line. The pre-existing chronology, that of Narrator A, was probably written sometime during the reigns of Iziaslav Jaroslavich (1054–68, 1069–73, 1076–78). Fitting this timeframe is Shakhmatov's proposal of a hypothetical compilation of 1073 that he attributed to the Caves monk Nikon.²⁷

The account of the calling of the Rus' by the Chuds, Krivichians, Ves', and Slovenians and their choosing of three brothers, Riurik, Truvor, and Sineus, to rule over them appears *s.a.* 862. Narrator A understood the Rus' at this time to be pagans, for he does not identify them here as Christians and later in the narrative refers to them as pagans (83,10 (*s.a.* 983)). One of the ongoing controversies in Eastern Slavic studies is whether the Riurik of the *Primary Chronicle* can be identified with the Rorik of Dorestad (or Jutland) in Western medieval sources.²⁸ According to two letters written by Hincmar of Reims in 863, Rorik of Dorstad was a Christian.²⁹ Simon Coupland supposed that he must have 'recently been converted and baptized'.³⁰ If so and if the Riurik of the *Primary Chronicle* is Rorik of Dorestad, then the Riurik of the *Primary Chronicle* may have been a Christian by the time he and his brothers were chosen. In any case, that possibility is not mentioned by the chronicler.

The *Primary Chronicle* and its sources are dealing with three categories of pagans: (1) Scandinavians, mostly Vikings/Varangians; (2) the Slavs before Christianization and those Slavs who engage in pagan or pagan-like practices often along with their Christianity, and (3) steppe people, usually of Turkic origin.

Scandinavians, Mostly Vikings/Varangians

Inclusion in part or in the whole of four treaties (*s.a.* 907, 912, 945, and 971) between the pagan Rus' and the Byzantine Greeks would not have been necessary

²⁷ Shakhmatov, *Raszyskanie*, pp. 420–60.

²⁸ See, e.g., N. Beliaev, 'Rorik Iutlandskii i Riurik Nachal'noi letopisi', *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, 3 (1929), 215–70; and Norman W. Ingham and Christian Raffensperger, 'Ryurik and the First Ryurikids: Context, Problems, Sources', *American Genealogist*, 82 (2007), 1–13 (pp. 11–13).

²⁹ Flodoard of Reims, *Historia Remensis ecclesiae*, ed. by J. Heller and G. Waitz, MGH SS, 13 (Hannover: Hahn, 1881), pp. 529 and 541.

³⁰ Simon Coupland, 'From Poachers to Gamekeepers: Scandinavian Warlords and Carolingian Kings', *Early Medieval Europe*, 7 (1998), 85–114 (pp. 98–99).

or even desirable if Narrator A had been trying to denigrate the pagan past. Instead, the recounting of the contents of the treaties, in two cases (*s.a.* 912 and 945) article by article, indicates the equal level on which the pagan Rus' negotiated with Christian Byzantine emperors. It contributes to the chronicler's effort to explain how the Rus' land came about, in particular in its relationship to Byzantium. The treaties with the Greeks provide an insight into the paganism of the Rus'.

In the treaty *s.a.* 907, we find only two categories of individuals mentioned, Greeks and Rus'. In the subsequent three treaties, we find a third category added: Christians. These categorizations imply that some of the Rus' may already have been Christian and that there was an attempt to extend the protection of Byzantium to Rus' Christians. For example, the treaty of 912 states:

аще украдеть Русинъ чтоо любо у хръстяна, или паки хръстянинъ у Русина, и ять будетъ томъ часѣ тать, егда татьбу сътворить, отъ погубившаго чтоо любо, аще приготовить ся татьбы творяи, и убиень будетъ, да не възмизеть ся съмърть его ни отъ хръстянъ, ни отъ Руси. (34,29–35,5)

[If a Rus' steals something from a Christian, or if a Christian from a Rus', and he is caught red-handed or when about to perform the theft, and is killed, then neither the Christian nor the Rus' may exact [compensation] for the death.]

Similarly, one of the articles of the treaty of 945 begins: 'If a Christian kills a Rus' or a Rus' a Christian' ('Аще убиеть хръстянинъ Русина или Русинъ хръстянина'; 51,22–51,23), but another article begins, 'if a Rus' assault a Greek with a sword, spear, or using another weapon, or a Greek a Rus' ' ('аще ударить мечемъ или копиемъ, или кацѣмъ инымъ съсудомъ Русинъ Гръчина или Гръчинъ Русина'; 52,2–52,4) seemingly to imply a distinction between Rus' who remained pagan and those who had converted to Christianity.

No names of the Rus' are given in the parts of the treaties reported *s.a.* 907 and 971. The names of the Rus' given in the treaty of 912 are predominantly Scandinavian.³¹ Likewise, in the treaty of 945, the names of the Rus' envoys and merchants are predominantly Scandinavian.³² Although we may have no other

³¹ *PVL*, 32,28–33,4: 'Мы отъ рода Русьскаго, Карлы, Ингелдъ, Фарлофъ, Верьмудъ, Рулавъ, Гуды, Руалдъ, Карнъ, Фрелавъ, Рюаръ, Актеву, Труанъ, Лидуль, Фостъ, Стемидъ, иже посълани отъ Ольга, великаго кнѣзя Русьскаго' ('We from the Rus' clan, Karl, Ingjald, Farulf, Vermund, Hrollaf, Gunnar, Harold, Karni, Frithleif, Hroarr, Angantyr, Throand, Leithulf, Fast, and Steinvith, are sent from Oleg, great prince of Rus' '). For the Latin alphabet equivalents of the names rendered in Cyrillic in the treaties of 912 and 945, I am following *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, ed. by Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor, pp. 65–66 and 73.

³² *PVL*, 46,20–47,12: 'Мы отъ рода Русьскаго росъли и гостие: Иворъ, съль Игоревъ, великаго кнѣзя Русьскаго, и обѣщии посъли: Вуефасть Святославль, сына Игорева; Искусеви

evidence of these deities by these names in Scandinavian sources, one can surmise that the deities they swear by are at least in part or mostly Scandinavian in origin. The alternative, that individuals with Scandinavian names are swearing by Slavic deities that are otherwise unattested in Slavic sources, is possible but less likely. A combination of Scandinavian and Slavic deities may, however, be possible.

The *Primary Chronicle* mentions the names of seven pagan deities — Perun, Volos, Khors, Dazh'bog, Stribog, Semar'gl, and Mokosh — but does not say much about them. Topping the list is Perun, who is mentioned seven times.

- In regard to the treaty *s.a.* 912, 'Oleg and his men, making an oath by the Rus' law, swore by their weapons and by Perun, their god, and by Volos, the god of tribute, and affirmed the peace'.³³
- In the treaty inserted *s.a.* 945, the stipulation in regard to anyone who violates the treaty states, 'if any of them are not baptized, may they receive help neither from God nor from Perun'.³⁴

Ольги княгыня; Слуды Игоревъ, нетия Игорева; Улѣбъ Володиславль; Каницаръ Предъславинъ; шигъбернъ Сфандръ, жены Улѣбовы; Прастѣнь Турѣдуви; Либи Арѣфастовъ; Гримъ Сфирковъ; Прастѣнь Якунь, нетия Игоревъ; Кары Тудковъ; Каршевъ Тудоровъ; Егри Ерлисковъ; Воистъ Иковъ; Истръ Яминьдовъ; Ятвягъ Гунаревъ; Шибридъ Алданъ; Колъ Клековъ; Стегги Етоновъ; Сфирка; Алвадъ Гудовъ; Фудри Тулбовъ; Муторъ Утинъ; купецъ Адунъ, Адолбъ, Ангивладъ, Улѣбъ, Фрутанъ, Гомоль, Куци, Емигъ, Турбридъ, Фуръ, Стѣнь, Бруны, Роалдъ, Гунастръ, Фрастѣнь, Ингелдъ, Турбернъ и други Турбернъ, Улѣбъ, Турбенъ, Моны, Руалдъ, Свѣнь, Стиръ, Алданъ, Тилии, Арубкаръ, Свѣнь, Вузелѣвъ Исинко Биричь, посълании отъ Игоря, великаго князя Русьскаго, и отъ всея княжия и отъ всѣхъ людии Русьския земля' ('We from the Rus' clan envoys and merchants, Ivar, envoy of Igor', great prince of Rus', and the general envoys: Vefast representing Sviatoslav, son of Igor'; Isgaut for the Princess Ol'ga; Slothi for Igor', nephew of Igor'; Oleif for Vladislav; Kanitzar for Predslava; Sigbjorn for Svahild, wife of Oleif; Freystein for Thorth; Leif for Arfast; Grim for Sverki; Freystein for Haakon, nephew of Igor'; Kari for Stoething; Karlsefni for Thorth; Hegri for Egfling; Voist for Voik; Eistr for Amund; Iarving for Gunnar; Sigfrid for Halfdan; Kill for Klakki; Steggi for Jotun; Sverki; Hallvarth for Guthi; Frothi for Throand; Munthor for Ut; the merchants Authun, Authulf, Ingivald, Oleif, Frutan, Gal, Kussi, Heming, Thorfrid, Thor, Stein, Bruni, Hroald, Gunnfast, Freystein, Ingjald, Thorbjorn, and the other Thorbjorn, Oleif, Thorbjorn, Manni, Hroald, Svein Styr, Halfdan Tirr, Aksbrand, Svein, Visleif, Sveinki Borich, sent by Igor' great prince of Rus' and from each prince and all the people of the Rus' land').

³³ *PVL*, 32,4–32,7: 'Ольга водивъше и мужа его на роту по Русьскому закону, кляша ся оружиемъ своимъ, и Перунъмъ, богъмъ своимъ, и Волосъмъ, скотиемъ богъмъ, и утвърдиша миръ.'

³⁴ *PVL*, 47,27–47,28: 'елико ихъ не кръщено есть, да не имуть помощи отъ Бога, ни отъ Перуна'.

- In the same treaty we find a statement in regard to ‘whoever of the princes or people of Rus’, whether Christian or non-Christian, who violates what was written on this parchment, they will merit death with their own weapons and will be cursed by God and by Perun’.³⁵ The formulation of this article of the treaty is further evidence that some of the Rus’ had become Christian.
- In the treaty *s.a.* 971 concluded between the Rus’ prince Sviatoslav and the Byzantine emperor John Tzimiskes, Sviatoslav swears that ‘if we do not maintain any of these stipulations I and those under me will be cursed by the gods in whom we believe, in Perun and in Volos, the god of tribute, and we will be yellow like gold, and slain with our own weapons’.³⁶
- The report *s.a.* 980 states that ‘when Volodimer began to rule alone in Kiev, he set up idols on the hill outside the towered court: a wooden Perun but a silver head and gold mustache, and others of Khors, Dazh’bog, Stribog, Semar’gl, and Mokosh’.³⁷
- After Volodimer was baptized, he returned to Kiev *s.a.* 988 and had the idols destroyed, but

ordered that Perun should be tied to the tail of a horse and dragged down from the hill along the Borichev to the Ruchai. He designated twelve men to beat it with branches not because he thought the wood felt it, but to insult the demon who had deceived man in this guise that he might receive retribution from man. [...] While the idol was being dragged along the Ruchai to the Dnepr, the unbelievers wept over it, for they had not yet accepted baptism. After dragging it, they cast it into the Dnepr. Volodimer said, ‘If it halts anywhere, then push it out from the bank, until it goes over the falls, then let it loose’. They obeyed his order. When the men let it go, it passed through the rapids and the wind cast it out on the bank, which to this day is called Perun’s Bank.³⁸

³⁵ *PVL*, 53,11–53,15: ‘Аще ли же кто отъ князь и отъ людии Русьскыхъ, или хръстиянь или не хръстиянь, преступитъ се, еже написано на харатыи сеи, и будетъ достоинъ своимъ оружьемъ умрети, и да будетъ клять отъ Бога и отъ Перуна.’

³⁶ *PVL*, 73,11,–73,16: ‘Аще ли отъ тѣхъ самѣхъ прежереченухъ не хранимъ, азъ же и съ мъною и подъ мъною, да имѣмъ клятву отъ бога, въ негоже вѣруемъ, въ Перуна и въ Волоса, бога скотия, да будемъ злати, яко злато се, и своимъ оружьемъ да исѣчени будемъ.’

³⁷ *PVL*, 79,11–79,15: ‘И нача княжити Володимиръ въ Киевѣ единъ, и постави кумиры на хълму, вниѣ двора теремнаго: Перуна древяна, а главу его сѣребряну, а усь златъ, и Хърса и Дажьбога и Стрибога и Сѣмагъгла и Мокошь.’

³⁸ *PVL*, 116,22–117,13: ‘Перуна же повелѣ привязати коневѣ къ хвосту и влещи съ горы по Боричеву на Ручаи, 12 мужа пристави бити жьзльемъ. Се же не яко древу чююще, нъ на поругание бѣсу, иже прельщаше симъ образъмъ чловѣкы, да възмъстие прииметь отъ чловѣкъ. “Велии еси, Господи, чюдьна дѣла твоя!” Въчера чѣстимъ отъ чловѣкъ, дньсь

- Again *s.a.* 988, when Volodimer ordered that churches be built where the idols had been, 'he founded the Church of St Basil on the hill where the idol of Perun and the others had stood, and where the Prince and the people had offered their sacrifices'.³⁹

From the foregoing, it seems that the *Primary Chronicle* author/compiler is trying to suggest that these gods were imposed on the Slavic people by the pagan Rus' princes. A few scholars assert that Perun can be identified with Thor.⁴⁰ N. K. Chadwick posited that Volos/Veles may be Freyr of Norse origin and that the second component of the phrase *bog skotiia* should be understood as a Slavonic rendition of Old Norse *skattr* (tribute), Old English *sceatt*, and Gothic *skatts* (*dinarion*). In addition, she glosses the Slavonic *Kb"rs* as Anglo-Saxon *hors*, Old Norwegian *bross* (horse).⁴¹ B. D. Grekov suggested Mokosh may be a Finnish deity.⁴² But these are isolated theories. Otherwise, we have widespread speculation and imaginative attempts to claim a Slavic origin for them, although little can be concluded in that regard with any confidence.⁴³

The Slavs before Christianization and those Slavs who Engage in Pagan or Pagan-like Practices Often Along with their Christianity

We find virtually nothing in the *Primary Chronicle* about the paganism of the pre-Christian Slavs. We can, however, identify two chronological phases to the names of princes in the *Primary Chronicle*. In the first chronological phase (to the ascension of Sviatoslav in 945), the princes and princesses have Slavic versions of

поругаемъ. Влекому же ему по Ручаеви къ Дѣнѣпру, плакаху ся его невѣрнии людие, еще бо не бяху прияли крещенія. И привлекъше, вѣринуша и въ Дѣнѣпръ. И пристави Володимиръ, рекъ: "Аще кѣде пристанеть вы то отрѣвайте его отъ берега, донѣдеже пороги проидеть, тѣгда охобитесь его". Они же повелѣное сътвориша. яко пустиша и, проиде сквозѣ пороги, извърже и вѣтръ на рѣнь, яко и до сего дѣне слово Перуня Рѣнь.'

³⁹ *PVL*, 118,20–118,23: 'и постави църковь святаго Василья на хълмѣ, идеже стояше кумиръ Перунъ и прочии, идеже требы творяху кнѣзь и людие'.

⁴⁰ S. Rozniecki, 'Perun und Thor', *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, 23 (1901), 462–520; and Aleksander Brückner, *Mitologia Slava* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1932), p. 72.

⁴¹ Nora Kershaw Chadwick, *The Beginnings of Russian History: An Enquiry into Sources* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946), pp. 83–90.

⁴² B. D. Grekov, *Kiev Rus* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), p. 516.

⁴³ For a discussion of the problem, see Myroslava T. Znayenko, *The Gods of the Ancient Slavs: Tatishchev and the Beginnings of Slavic Mythology* (Columbus: Slavica, 1980).

Scandinavian names: Oleg (< Helgi); Igor' (< Ingvar); Ol'ga (< Helga). These names are sometimes used in the second chronological phase. Beginning with Sviatoslav in 945, the names of most of the princes in the *Primary Chronicle* are non-Christian Slavic (perhaps, initially, reign) names: Jaroslav (Fierce Glory), Jaropolk (Fierce Regiment), Iziaslav (Notable Glory), Sviatopolk (Sacred Regiment), Sviatoslav (Sacred Glory), Vseslav (All Glory), Mstislav (Revenge Glory), Vsevolod (Ruler of All), Volodimer (World Ruler). Even after the Christianization in 989 when the princes received Christian names, they are still called by their non-Christian Slavic names in the *Primary Chronicle*, not their Christian names: for example, Volodimer (Sviatoslavich) instead of *Vasilii*; Jaroslav (Volodimerovich) instead of *Iurii*; Vsevolod (Jaroslavich) instead of *Andrei*; Vsevolod (Mstislavich) instead of *Gavril*/Gabriel; and Iziaslav (Mstislavich) instead of *Panteleimon*.⁴⁴

Of significant concern to the *Primary Chronicle* author/compiler are sorcerers (*volkhvy*), who he sees as an indigenous non-Christian threat to the Christianized people of Rus'. The sorcerers are described *s.a.* 1024 as appearing in Suzdal' when Prince Jaroslav had travelled to Novgorod. The *Primary Chronicle* reports, 'they killed old people by satanic inspiration and devil worship, saying that they would spoil the harvest' ('избиваху старую чадь по дияволу научению и бѣсованию, глаголюще, яко си държать гобино'; 147,24–147,25). It looks as though the sorcerers had followed through on their threat because famine forced the people of the region to go to the Bulgars to buy grain. The *Primary Chronicle* tells us,

Слышавъ же Ярославъ вѣлхвы, приде Суждалю; изъима вѣлхвы, расточи, а другыя показни, рекъ сице: 'Богъ наводитъ по грѣхомъ на куюждо землю гладьмь, или морьмь, или ведрьмь, или иною казнию, а чловѣкъ не вѣсть ничьтоже'. (147,29–148,5)

[When Jaroslav heard of the sorcerers, he went to Suzdal', seized the sorcerers and dispersed them, but punished others, saying, 'In proportion to its sins, God inflicts upon every land hunger, pest, drought, or some other punishment, and man has no understanding thereof.]

The sorcerers are, thus, placed in the same category as pagans; that is, they are ignorant (which allows them to be deceived by the Devil) and they act unknowingly as agents of God's punishment (see below).

The chronicler describes how Vseslav's mother bore him by enchantment and that sorcerers told her to bind the caul he was born with to him, which he wore 'to this day on himself' ('и до сего дъне на собѣ'; 155,14) (Vseslav died in 1101). The

⁴⁴ A. F. Litvina and F. B. Uspenskii, *Vybor imeni u russkikh kniazei v XI–XVI vv.: Dinasticheskaia istoriia skvoz' prizmu antroponimiki* (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), pp. 461–626.

chronicler explains that ‘for this reason he [Vseslav] is so pitiless in bloodshed’ (‘сего ради немилостивъ есть на кръвопролитие’; 155,14–155,15 (1044)). Of the remaining nine references to sorcerer(s), eight occur *s.a.* 1071: how a sorcerer inspired by the Devil misled the people (174,24); how sorcerers deluded themselves (175,22); how sorcerers deceived the Novgorodians (181,4); in two cases people capture the sorcerers (176,14 and 181,7–181,8); one reference to Simon Magus (180,14); one reference to a sorcerer in Novgorod (180,24); and one reference to a sorcerer who claimed omniscience before Gleb slew him (181,9–181,15). The ninth reference occurs *s.a.* 1091 about a sorcerer in Rostov who died shortly after appearing (214,23). The narrator is clearly interested in any appearance of sorcerers in the land even when he does not report that any harm occurred, but he does not explicitly characterize their activities as pagan, just Devil inspired and self-delusional.

Steppe People, Usually of Turkic Origin

A method of getting at the attitude expressed in the *Primary Chronicle* towards pagans is to see how the specific terms ‘pagan(s)’, ‘Godless’, and ‘lawless’ are used. There are thirty-two appearances of the term ‘pagan(s)’ in the *Primary Chronicle*.

- Thirteen times it is used as a synonym for the Polovtsians: 172,15 (1068); 219,11 (1093); 219,13 (1093); 226,15 (1094); 228,22 (1095); 228,24 (1095); 230,2 (1096); 230,8 (1096); 230,9 (1096); 263,25 (1097); 264,6 (1097); 264,10 (1097); and 285,7 (1110).⁴⁵
- Seven times it refers to pagan invasions.
 - Six of those times it is used in reference to God’s punishing Christians for their sins through pagan incursions: 167,19 (1068) ‘God let loose the pagans upon us because of our sins’ (‘Грѣхъ же ради нашихъ попусти Богъ на ны поганья’); 167,28–168,1 (1068) ‘When any land has sinned, God punishes them by death or famine or pagan invasion’ (‘Земли же съгрѣшивъши которѣи любо, казнить Богъ съмъртию, ли гладьмъ, ли наведениемъ поганыхъ’); 222,8 (1093); 222,11 (1093) pagans are the ‘scourge of God’ (‘бато҃гъ Божиѣ’); 223,27–223,28 (1093) ‘May the incursions of pagans with their torments allow us to come to know the Lord’ (‘Да нахождениемъ поганыхъ мучими Владыку познаемъ’); and 233,12 (1096).

⁴⁵ In the *Testament of Volodimer Monomakh*, we find an additional two cases where the term ‘pagans’ is a synonym for the Polovtsians (249,19 and 254,26).

- One of those seven is in regard to a portent, a large star, that presaged pagan invasions of the Rus' land: 164,11 (1065).
- Two times the *Primary Chronicle* indicates that the pagans are ignorant because they do not know the light of Christianity — 32,17 (907) and 83,10 (983) — the latter in regard to the pre-Christian Rus'.
- Once God saves the Christians from the pagans, in this case, the Törks: 163,9 (1060).
- Four times it is used to describe particular individuals among the pagan Rus': 54,4 (945), Igor' and his people took an oath (at least such as were pagans); 61,1 (955), Ol'ga says that she is still a pagan; 61,29 (955), Ol'ga says that her people and her son are pagans; and 63,27 (955), Sviatoslav 'followed pagan ways' ('творяше нравы поганьскыя').
- Once it refers to 'the Krivichians and other pagans' ('Кривичи и прочии погании'; 14,13 (n.d.)).
- Once it stipulates that it is not appropriate for Christians to marry pagans (in reference to Princess Anna's proposed marriage to Volodimer): 110,4 (988).
- Once it appears in an appeal to the martyrs Boris and Gleb to 'subject the pagans to our princes' ('покорита поганья подъ нозѣ княземъ нашимъ'; 139,8 (1015)).
- In one reference, the term 'pagan' is used four times where the chronicler admonishes his readers not to 'call ourselves Christians as long as we live like pagans' ('не словѣмъ нарицающе ся хръстияни, а поганьскы живуще'; 170,3; 170,4; 170,7; and 170,15 (1068)).
- Once the *Primary Chronicle* says that two Rus' princes, 'Oleg [Sviatoslavich] and Boris [Viacheslavich] led the pagans to attack the Rus' land' ('приведе Ольгъ и Борисъ поганья на Русьскую землю'; 200,5–200,6 (1078)).

The first part of the *Primary Chronicle* (i.e. through 1054) displays towards the pagans a relatively moderate attitude that is remarkable for a work compiled and written by a Christian monk. If we assume that writing came into Rus' with the conversion to Christianity, then very little, if any, pagan writing should be evident in the *Primary Chronicle*, and that is the case.⁴⁶ Thus, the somewhat moderate attitude of Narrator A is unlikely to have derived from any pagan sources.

Another term that one might expect to see associated with pagans is 'Godless'. There is one reference in the *Primary Chronicle* to the Rus' being 'Godless'

⁴⁶ Likhachev discusses oral traditions of the pre-Christian Slavic people in the *Primary Chronicle*. D. S. Likhachev, 'Istoriko-literaturnyi ocherk', in *Povest' vremennykh let*, ed. by D. S. Likhachev, 2 vols (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1950), II, 60–63.

(безбожнии) before Christianization (21,24 (866)). Three times it is used as a synonym for the Polovtsians: 163,14–163,15 (1061) ‘This was the first evil from the pagan and Godless foes’ (‘Се бысть первое зъло отъ поганыхъ и безбожьныхъ врагъ’); 232,21 and 234,1 (1096) ‘Godless sons of Ishmael’ (‘Безбожьнии же сынове Измаилеви’ and ‘безбожьнии сынове Измаилеви’).⁴⁷ Once it is used in reference to a specific Polovtsian, Boniak: 232,10 (1096) ‘Godless and mangy thief’ (‘безбожьный, шолудивый, отай хыщъникъ’).

In contrast, the term ‘lawless’, which one might expect to be applied mainly to pagans because they do not have the Christian law, is, instead, applied a majority of times to Christians who transgress the law. It is applied four times to pagans (14,17; 16,1; 224,30; and 233,5), once to Muslims (86,17), three times to Sviatopolk Volodimerovich (the Damned) in 1015 (132,17; 133,2; and 135,22) and once to the murderers of Boris as the ‘lawless wretches’ (‘безаконъници’) (135,2), three times in regard to Christian lawlessness in general (213,21; 222,7; and 223,22), and four times to ancient Israelites (three of those in quotations from the Bible) (98,2; 98,6; 137,6; and 224,9).

In the introductory part, the *Primary Chronicle* quotes Hamartolus: ‘Among all nations, there are some who have a written law, while others observe customs, for, without law, ancestral usage is accepted’ (‘Ибо комуждо языку овѣмъ законъ исписанъ есть, другимъ же обычаи, зане безаконнымъ отъчъствиемъ мнѣти ся’; 14,15–14,18). The quotation goes on to cite examples of nations that follow fixed customs of ancestral usage: the Seres, Bactrians, Chaldeans and Babylonians, Geleans, those in Britain, and the Amazons. Narrator B adds the Polovtsians, a steppe people, to Hamartolus’s list:

якоже се и нынѣ при насъ Половци законъ държати отъць своихъ: крѣвь проливати, а хваляще ся о семъ, и ядуше мѣртвѣчину и всю нечистоту, хомѣкы и сусѣлы, и поимають мачехы своя и ятрѣви, и ины обычаи отъць своихъ. (16,12–16,16)

[Even so, now during our time, the Polovtsians maintain the law of their fathers in the shedding of blood and in glorifying themselves about this, as well as in eating dead and all unclean things, hamsters and marmots. They marry their mother-in-law and their sisters-in-law, and observe other usages of their fathers.]

⁴⁷ Chekin uses the appearance of this term in the *Primary Chronicle* to characterize the general Rus’ attitude towards the Tatars from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries. Leonid S. Chekin, ‘The Godless Ishmaelites: The Image of the Steppe in Eleventh–Thirteenth-Century Rus’’, *Russian History*, 19 (1992), 9–28. But it is used only twice in the *Primary Chronicle*, both *s.a.* 1096 and then only specifically in reference to the Polovtsians.

The chronicler compares this reliance on custom to Christians, who 'have but one law' ('законъ имамъ единый'; 16,19). The intent of the chronicler is clear even if his use of 'law' is ambiguous. He seems to be contrasting the one written law of the Christians with the separate regional customs and laws of the pagans.⁴⁸

When the Polovtsians first appear in Rus', according to the *Primary Chronicle* s.a. 1061, Narrator B refers to them as 'pagan and Godless foes' (163,14–163,15). In contrast to the description of the Polovtsians, when the *Primary Chronicle* describes the Pechenegs, another steppe people, who first entered the Rus' land s.a. 915, no reference to their being Godless or pagan was made. They were simply described as making peace with the Rus' prince Igor' and moving on to the Danube (42,12–42,14). Here Narrator A could not make a distinction between pagan and Christian because at the time the Rus' were also pagan. Yet, he does not make a distinction between the Pechenegs and the Greeks or Bulgarians, who were Christian, when the Greeks wanted to enlist the aid of them against the Bulgarians.

Metahistorical Analysis of the Narrative

To understand better the virtual past of the narrators in the *PVL*, I have undertaken a metahistorical approach, as delineated by Hayden White in his epic *Metahistory* (1973).⁴⁹ White asserted that historians prefigure the emplotment of the narrative:⁵⁰ they are writing according to their ideological position⁵¹ towards

⁴⁸ On the pitfalls of lexicographical analysis of the unstable meanings of *law* (закон) and *custom* (обычай or отечество) specifically in relation to their usage in the *PVL*, see Simon Franklin, 'On Meanings, Functions and Paradigms of Law in Early Rus', *Russian History*, 34 (2007), 63–81 (pp. 63–64).

⁴⁹ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

⁵⁰ Following Northrop Frye's theory of the archetypal Mythos, White identified four master narrative emplotments: Comedy, Romance, Tragedy, and Satire or Irony. See Northrop Frye, 'The Archetypes of Literature', in *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1963), pp. 7–20; and Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), especially 'Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths', pp. 131–239. Each of the four archetypal Mythoi or generic plots, according to Frye, has six possible phases, three of which it shares with the preceding Mythos and three with the succeeding, for a total of twelve phases or, if we were to use White's terminology, narrative sub-emplotments.

⁵¹ White, *Metahistory*, pp. 22–23, defined four ideological positions taken by those committed to a rational defence of their worldview: Conservatism, Anarchism, Radicalism, and Liberalism. He

the subject matter. Each type of emplotment involves an 'elective affinity' for a particular mode of argument (explanation)⁵² and dominant rhetorical trope.⁵³ In the resultant 'quadruple tetrad'⁵⁴ typology of historical narrative, White lined up the ideological positions, types of emplotment, modes of argument (or explanation), and dominant rhetorical tropes this way:

Conservative / Comedic / Organicist / Synecdoche

Anarchist / Romantic / Formist / Metaphor

Radical / Tragic / Mechanistic / Metonymy

Liberal / Satirical or Ironic / Contextualist / Irony⁵⁵

Thus, liberals would emplot the narrative of, say, a history of their country in a Satirical or Ironic mode with a Contextualist argument and Irony as the dominant rhetorical trope. Radicals, in contrast, would emplot the same history in a Tragic mode with its accompanying argument and dominant trope. When one does not know a particular historian's ideological position towards the subject matter, as is the case with the *Primary Chronicle*, then identifying the emplotment, mode of argument, and dominant trope of the narrative may help one discern the ideological position of the narrator. In the *Primary Chronicle*, I found two successive emplotments, which implies either the narrator adopted different ideological

adopted and modified a typology found in Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1936), especially 'The Utopian Mentality', pp. 192–263.

⁵² According to White, *Metahistory*, p. 11, 'in addition to the level of conceptualization on which the historian emplots his narrative account of "what happened", there is another level on which he may seek to explicate "the point of it all" or "what it all adds up to" in the end'. This level of 'explanation by formal argument' adopted Stephen C. Pepper's four 'world hypotheses': Organicist, Formist, Mechanist, and Contextualist. Stephen C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), especially 'Part Two: The Relatively Adequate Hypotheses', pp. 141–314. Cf. White, *Metahistory*, pp. 14–18.

⁵³ White identified four master rhetorical tropes: Synecdoche, Metaphor, Metonymy, and Irony. White, *Metahistory*, pp. 31–38.

⁵⁴ The term 'quadruple tetrad' is Hans Kellner's. See his 'A Bedrock of Order: Hayden White's Linguistic Humanism', *History and Theory*, 19 (1980), 1–29 (p. 1).

⁵⁵ For a discussion of these affinities applied to four narratives other than the ones White used, see Donald Ostrowski, 'A Metahistorical Analysis: Hayden White and Four Narratives of "Russian" History', *Clio*, 19 (1990), 215–36. White's affinities must be understood mainly as heuristic and non-determinative devices. In his *Metahistory*, three of the four historians he uses as examples 'transcended' his typology.

positions towards chronologically different subject matter or, as is more likely, we have two narrators.

The beginning of the narrative of the *Primary Chronicle* (i.e. just after the biblical Flood) occurs at a low point in human history, when humankind has barely escaped complete destruction. The *Primary Chronicle* narrative then follows an upward trajectory. The high point of the narrative is the events leading up to the baptism *s.a.* 988 of Volodimer Sviatoslavich (reigned 980–1015) in a chiasmic relation of five story lines,⁵⁶ which unfolds, after a succession conflict with Sviatopolk the Damned, into the supreme reign of Volodimer's son Jaroslav the Wise (*Primudryi*). The narrative thus far follows a generally upward direction, from the point of view of the author/compiler, a trajectory leading from the Hebrews to the birth of Christ and from there to the reign of Constantine eventually leading to the baptism of Ol'ga and of her grandson Volodimer. Another high point is reached with the reign of Jaroslav Volodimerovich (1019–54); in particular, the appointment of the first indigenous Slavic metropolitan of Kiev, Ilarion, *s.a.* 1051. We might see the narrative to this point as following the Mythos of an archetypal Comedy. For the most part, it focuses on human agency, not direct intervention by divine or supernatural forces. Oleg, Igor', and Sviatoslav sign treaties with the Greeks. Ol'ga outsmarts the Byzantine Emperor as well as the Derevlans. Princess Anna is the one who brings Volodimer to baptism. Jaroslav makes Kiev a centre of Christian learning. The corresponding Comedic phase or sub-emplotment is phase 3: existent society replaced by a happy society (pagan Rus' society replaced by a Christian Rus' society). The 'blocking agent' (in Frye's terminology), which every comedic emplotment has and which must be overthrown for the happy ending to occur, can be seen to be the belief in pagan deities. The narrator refers to this residual belief in the description of the carrying of the idol of Perun to the Dnepr River (see above). This Comedic Mythos is typified by *anagorisis*; in this case, the change from pagan ignorance to Christian knowledge. The process results in the realization of a newborn society. See, for example, Volodimer's appeal *s.a.* 988 for God to 'look on this new people' ('призьри на новыя люди сия'; 118,13). Although the affinities of the trope of Synecdoche and the Organic mode of explanation are missing in the narrative, the ideological implication of Conservatism is there in terms of the long historical development (from the biblical Flood) to the

⁵⁶ Donald Ostrowski, 'The Account of Volodimir's Conversion in the *Povest' vremennykh let*: A Chiasmus of Stories', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 31 (2007), 567–80.

most realistic form of utopia (the reign of Jaroslav the Wise).⁵⁷ It is likely that this emplotment was in an earlier chronicle (perhaps the hypothetical compilation of 1073 that Shakhmatov attributed to the monk Nikon) that carried the narrative through the reign of Jaroslav and was incorporated into the *Primary Chronicle*, as we know it, with interpolations by the *Primary Chronicle* author/compiler.

Then things begin to get more difficult with the coming of the Polovtsians *s.a.* 1061. While the narrative for the next fifty years or so has its ups and downs, the trajectory is generally even. The lack of unity among the princes that the chronicler describes is one of the major causes of the pagan/Polovtsian depredations, and thus must be counted high among 'our sins'. In that sense, this second emplotment corresponds rather neatly with one of the common plots of Romance wherein a dragon lays waste to a land ruled by a helpless old king. The Romantic phase, or sub-emplotment, it corresponds to is phase 4: happy society resists change (in this case, the threat from the pagan Polovtsians to overrun Christian Rus'). The Romantic Mythos represents conflict (*agon*, in ancient Greek drama as the scripted struggle between characters underlying the action of the play). The hero of the romance in this case is Volodimer Monomakh, who is mentioned almost at the beginning of the second narrative *s.a.* 1053 as being born 'from the Greek princess' ('отъ цъсарицѣ Грькынѣ'; 160,30–160,31),⁵⁸ but who ascends the throne of Kiev almost at the end of the narrative *s.a.* 1113. Among other indications that he is the hero of the romance is the appeal of the people of Kiev to him *s.a.* 1097 through Vsevolod's widow and Metropolitan Nikola 'to guard the Rus' land and to have battle with the pagans' ('блюсти земли Русьской и брань имѣти съ погаными'; 264,5–264,6).

The chronicler does not hold out much optimism for overcoming the pagans/Polovtsians without divine intervention. A case in point is the entry *s.a.* 1110. The princes Sviatopolk Iziaslavich, David Sviatoslavich, and Volodimer Vsevolodovich set forth to go against the Polovtsians but return after they reach the Voin' about thirteen kilometres south of Pereiaslav' on the left bank of the Dnepr, not far into the steppe. The narrative ends with a description of a Polovtsian campaign that resulted in their taking a settlement near Pereiaslav'.

The chronicler then describes 'a sign' ('знамение') at the Caves Monastery:

⁵⁷ White, *Metahistory*, p. 25.

⁵⁸ On this 'Greek princess', see Alexander Kazhdan, 'Rus'-Byzantine Princely Marriages in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 12–13 (1988/89), 414–29 (pp. 416–17).

яви ся стълпъ огньнъ отъ земля до небесе, а мълния освѣтиша всю землю, и на небеси погръмѣ въ часъ 1 нощи; весь миръ видѣ. Съ же стълпъ ста на трапезьници камянѣи, яко не видѣти крѣста бяша, и стоя мало, съступи на църквъ, и ста надъ гробъмъ Феодосиевымъ, и по томъ ступи на върхъ, акы къ вѣстоку лицъмъ, и по томъ невидимъ бысть. (284,7–284,15)

[A pillar of fire appeared that reached from the land to the sky; lightning illumined the whole countryside, and thunder was heard in the sky at the first hour of the night. The whole populace beheld the miracle. The pillar first stood over the stone refectory, so that its cross could not be seen. Then it moved a little, reached the church, and halted over the tomb of Feodosii. Then it rose, as if facing to the eastward, and soon after became invisible.]

The chronicler asserts that 'this portent was not an actual pillar but an angelic manifestation' ('Се же бяше не огнь стълпъ, нъ видѣ ангельскъ'; 284,15–284,16). Since humans cannot see angels directly, these 'servants' ('служы') of God are sent forth as 'a flaming fire' ('огнь палящъ'). The chronicler then contends that this sign was an omen:

Тако и се явление которое показываше, еможе бѣ быти, еже и бысть: на вѣторое бо лѣто не съ ли ангель вожь бысть на иноплемьники супостаты, якоже рече: 'Ангель предъ тобою предъидеть', и: 'Ангель твои буди съ тобою'? (285,2–285,7)

[This apparition indicated an event that was destined to take place, and its presage was later realized. For in the following year, was not an angel the guide of our princes against the foreigners, even as it is said, 'An angel will go before you' (Exodus 23. 23) and 'Your angel be with you'?]

Thus, the fiery pillar is a metaphor for an angel, and Metaphor is the dominant trope of Romance in White's typology.

So we might see the post-1054 narrative as following the archetypal emplotment of Romance, with the various elective affinities that implies: Anarchist ideological implication (the lack of central authority in the early Rus' principalities); Formist mode of explanation (the author's Christian Neo-Platonic theology); and the trope of Metaphor (an angel manifested as a fiery pillar). In keeping with the fairy-tale motif of Romance, utopia is on a non-temporal plan and could be realized at any time⁵⁹ as soon as the pagans are defeated. We see interest in the post-1054 narration in unusual natural phenomena, such as the Volkhov River flowing backwards, any large stars that shine brightly for several days then disappear, or unusual births, that might be manifesting themselves as portents, and supernatural occurrences, such as a demon riding on a pig or invisible demons riding horses. Between

⁵⁹ White, *Metahistory*, p. 25.

s.a. 1063 and *s.a.* 1114, we find nineteen of these phenomena and occurrences described in the *Primary Chronicle*.⁶⁰ In contrast, the pre-1054 narrative mentions no portents at all (i.e. the primary focus is on human agency).⁶¹

The two emplotments are complementary, which is particularly significant even if one does not accept the contention that the two narratives were written by two separate chroniclers — the narration to 1054 by Nikon; the narration from 1054 to the end by Vasilii. Within Frye's typology, each of the four master Mythoi — Comedy, Romance, Tragedy and Irony/Satire — corresponds respectively to times of day (morning, afternoon, evening, and night), seasons of the year (spring, summer, autumn, and winter), and passages of a human life (youth, maturity, old age, and death), so the Mythos of Romance follows that of Comedy as afternoon follows morning, summer follows spring, and maturity follows youth, which is what we would expect when two adjacent emplotments are found combined in chronological succession.

Conclusion

To sum up, the *Primary Chronicle* was most likely compiled/composed in the Kievan Caves Monastery between 1114 and 1116. The author was a monk of that monastery who is identified in the text as Vasilii. At least two copies were made, one in 1116 by Hegumen Sylvester of St Michael's Monastery in Vyduhichi, and another by an unknown scribe probably in the Kievan Caves Monastery by 1118. These two copies became the respective hyparchetypes of the two extant branches

⁶⁰ *PVL*, 163,21 (1063) Volkhov flowed backward; 164,6–11 (1065) large star as though made of blood; 164,14–18 (1065) malformed child; 164,19–20 (1065) sun like the moon; 190,13–14 (1074) demon in the guise of a Pole; 191,2–5 (1074) demon riding on a pig; 192,21–27 (1074) demons in the guise of two youths with radiant faces; 214,14 (1091) solar eclipse; 215,7 (1091) demons in Polotsk running about like men; 215,8 (1091) same demons invisible on horseback; 215,12 (1091) large circle in middle of the sky; 276,10 (1102) fiery ray shining day and night; 276,14–15 (1102) portent in the moon; 276,15–18 (1102) rainbows surrounding the sun; 280,21 (1104) sun in a circle in middle of a cross; 280,24 (1104) portent in the sun and moon for three days; 284,15–16 (1110) pillar of fire; *PSRL*, II, col. 268 (1111) pillar of fire; and *PSRL*, II, col. 274 (1113) sign in the sun.

⁶¹ The Laurentian branch does indicate an unusual astronomical phenomenon *s.a.* 1028: 'a sign [Radziwiłł and Academy copies: of a snake] appeared in the sky for all the land to see' ('Знамение [Radziwiłł and Academy copies: 'змиево'] явился на небеси, яко видѣти вьсеи земли' [149,21]), but this appears to be an interpolation most likely made by Sylvester.

or traditions (not redactions) of the *Primary Chronicle* copies. The *Primary Chronicle* author/compiler also included a great deal of material from previous chronicle writing and other sources to narrate his virtual past understanding of Rus' history.

A metahistorical analysis allows us to determine two emplotments of that narrative. The first emplotment, a Mythos of Comedy, begins with the ending of the biblical Flood and the dividing of the world among the sons of Noah and culminates with the appointment of Ilarion as Metropolitan of Rus' by Jaroslav and a coda to the end of Jaroslav's reign. This emplotment was most likely that of an earlier chronicler made during the reign of Iziaslav Jaroslavich (between 1054 and 1078). The second emplotment, a Mythos of Romance, begins *s.a.* 1051 with description of the founding of the Caves Monastery, then jumps to 1054, and extends through the entry for 1114 in the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch/tradition. In both emplotments the pagans are embraced as an integral part of the narrative. In the part emplotted as Comedy, the pagans are included in the narrative to help Narrator A (possibly the monk Nikon) fulfill the task he set for himself in the title of the work; that is, to explain 'from where the Rus' land began'. He then describes the rise of the Rus' from pagan ignorance and custom to Christian knowledge and law. In the part emplotted as Romance, the pagans, in the form of the Polovtsians, represent to Narrator B (probably the monk Vasilii) a supernatural threat as divine agents to punish the Rus' Christians for their sins. Only another divine agent, an angel sent by God and manifesting itself as a fiery pillar, can save the Rus' land and the Caves Monastery and lead the Rus' princes to victory over the pagan Other.

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY IN THE EARLY NOVGORODIAN ANNALISTIC WRITING

Timofey V. Guimon

Novgorod was an important political centre as well as a centre of writing in the north-west of Rus', and the first annalistic records in Novgorod were made as early as the eleventh century.¹ In the twelfth century the annals were kept there systematically, year by year, and were sponsored by the local archbishops. These annals were the continuation of a compilation created in 1115, which was based on the Kievan *Primary Chronicle* (presumably a version earlier than the 'classical' *Povest' vremennykh let*²) and on earlier Novgorodian materials.

¹ It is better to call the historical texts produced in Novgorod in the eleventh and twelfth centuries 'annals', not 'chronicles'. The Russian word 'летопись' (*letopis'*) means a historical text with the chronological framework and 'empty years', but not necessarily brief. This word is usually translated into English as 'chronicle' (especially in the names of particular texts: the *Primary Chronicle*, the *First Novgorod Chronicle*, etc.). Some scholars prefer not to distinguish between 'annals' and 'chronicles' at all (David Dumville, 'What is a Chronicle?', in *The Medieval Chronicle II: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle, Driebergen/Utrecht 16–21 July 1999*, ed. by Erik Kooper, Costerus New Series, 144 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 1–27; and Sarah Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form: Narrative in Annals and Chronicles', in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. by Nancy Partner (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), pp. 88–108), but if one does so, the texts produced in Novgorod would be closer to annals. A good Western European parallel to the annals of Novgorod is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Contrary to its traditional name, the latter text is an example of elaborated annals, containing brief and extended entries, 'empty years' and poetic narrations, all united by the chronological framework. See Cecily Clark, 'The Narrative Mode of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle before the Conquest', in *England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to D. Whitelock*, ed. by Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 215–35.

² *Povest' vremennykh let* is a traditional designation for the common text of the *Laurentian*, *Hypatian* and *Radzivil* chronicles up to the 1110s. Many scholars agree that this Kievan chronicle

Being thus a derivative of the Kievan source, the annals of Novgorod nonetheless deserve a separate interest. The Kievan text was augmented in Novgorod with some important additions concerning this northern city, which resulted in a 'Kievo-Novgorodian' narrative on the earliest history of Rus', including the conversion of Kiev and Novgorod. The section for the eleventh century is also of special interest since it contains notes on the foundation of St Sophia Cathedral of Novgorod, which were later revised (at least twice) by Novgorodian annalists. The text of the Novgorodian archiepiscopal annals updated yearly from 1115 is well preserved in the surviving manuscripts, and due to recent studies we know more about the upkeep of this 'living chronicle' than about any other historiographical tradition of early Rus'. Moreover, the archiepiscopal annals were copied for the needs of Novgorodian monasteries; there were at least two such cases. Thus, one can see how historical texts copied in local ecclesiastical communities differed from the major annals of the northern city-state.

In this chapter, I will discuss how the Christian identity, the identity of Novgorod as a separate polity, and the local identities of the clerics from various religious houses interacted in the early annalistic writing of Novgorod in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It is, however, difficult to analyse the Novgorodian annalistic records made in the eleventh century, since there are only some traces of them in surviving texts. That is why the following analysis will focus on the Novgorodian compilation of 1115 (which united the Kievan chronicle with the earlier Novgorodian materials), the subsequent yearly annalistic writing, the revision of the early section made in the 1160s, and the usage of the archiepiscopal annals by local religious communities. All of these stages are important if we study the identities of Novgorodian annalists; as well, the famous laconicism and business-like style of the Novgorodian annals, in which only a few things are expressed explicitly, make the study of textual history and narrative structure the key methods in such an analysis.

The Manuscript Tradition

The earliest surviving manuscript of Rus' chronicles was created in Novgorod. This is the Synodal codex of the *First Novgorod Chronicle* (the so-called *Elder Version* of

of the 1110s was based on earlier annalistic texts, but the details are the subject of a long-standing discussion. For details, see Oleksiy Tolochko's and Donald Ostrowski's contributions in this volume and below in this chapter.

this chronicle), which belongs partly to the thirteenth and partly to the fourteenth century.³ The manuscript lacks its first sixteen quires and abruptly starts with the annal for 1016. The first part of the manuscript dealing with the period from 1016 to 1234 was written by one scribe in the thirteenth century, probably in or soon after 1234.⁴ The second part, including the records for the years 1234–1330, was written by another scribe in or soon after 1330. Three flyleaves were added thereafter, containing contemporary additions by four scribes for 1330–33, 1337, 1345, and 1352.⁵ These later materials indicate that the manuscript was written in St George Monastery, the main religious house in the suburbs of Novgorod.

The Synodal MS is not our only witness to the early annalistic writing in Novgorod. The so-called *Younger Version* of the *First Novgorod Chronicle* is represented by two mid-fifteenth-century manuscripts (Commission MS and Academy MS) and several later copies.⁶ The text of the *Younger Version* is close to that of the *Elder Version* for the years 1075–1330. There are a number of substantial differences between them, but in general the text is basically the same. As for the shorter sections for 1016–74 and 1330–52, the relationships between the two versions are more complicated.⁷

Other witnesses to the early annalistic writing of Novgorod are some fifteenth-century and later annalistic compilations, which preserve the Novgorodian annals mixed with material from non-Novgorodian sources: these are the *First Sophian Chronicle*, the *Fourth Novgorod Chronicle*, the *Novgorod Karamzin Chronicle*, the *Chronicle of Avraamka*, the *Tver' Compilation*, and some others. All of these texts are important, for they do not derive from either version of the *First Novgorod*

³ It is now kept in the State Historical Museum in Moscow (MS Synodal 786). Its facsimile edition is available in *Nogorodskaja kharatejnaja letopis'*, ed. by Mikhail N. Tikhomirov (Moscow: Nauka, 1964); a critical edition in *Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis' staršego i mladšego izvodov*, ed. by Arsenij N. Nasonov (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1950; repr. *PSRL*, III), and an English translation in *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016–1471*, trans. by R. Michell and N. Forbes (London: Camden Society, 1914).

⁴ Timofey V. Guimon and Aleksey A. Gippius, 'Novye dannye po istorii teksta Novgorodskoj pervoj letopisi', *Novgorodskij istoričeskij sbornik*, 7 (1999), 17–47 (pp. 31–41).

⁵ See Timofey V. Guimon, 'Pripiski na dopolnitel'nykh listakh v Sinodal'nom spiske Novgorodskoj I letopisi', in *Norna u istochnika Sud'by: Sbornik statej v chest' E. A. Mel'nikovoj*, ed. by Tatiana N. Jackson (Moscow: Indrik, 2001), pp. 53–60.

⁶ For description of these manuscripts, see *PSRL*, III, pp. v–vii and 7–12. The text is printed on pp. 103–427.

⁷ For 1016–76, see below; for 1330–52, see Guimon, 'Pripiski'.

Chronicle and thus can confirm their readings.⁸ These later compilations also contain some additional Novgorodian material for the eleventh century.

The Archiepiscopal Annals of Novgorod

The general similarity of the two versions of the *First Novgorod Chronicle* is explained by the assumption that both derive from the archiepiscopal annals of Novgorod, which were kept at St Sophia Cathedral from the early twelfth to the fifteenth century.⁹ The starting point for these annals was perhaps the year 1115. In this year an annalistic compilation was created in Novgorod, in which the text of the *Kievan Primary Chronicle* and some earlier Novgorodian records were brought together.

From that time onwards, the archiepiscopal annals were kept on a yearly basis. The place where they were updated — as shown by Mikhail Pogodin with certainty¹⁰ — was the Cathedral of St Sophia. As demonstrated by Aleksey Gippius, the linguistic, stylistic, and other features of the *First Novgorod Chronicle*, as well as some visual peculiarities of the Synodal MS, provide much information on how the annals were kept. It is even possible to divide the text into sections written by various individuals, and the boundaries between these sections normally coincide with the changes of archbishops at this northern see. This means that almost every new archbishop must have entrusted the business of keeping annals to a new person (unless he did this himself).¹¹ The scribes who updated these annals were probably on archbishops' staffs as secretaries, while at the same time being clerics in one of the Novgorodian religious houses. At least one such figure can be identified in the thirteenth century: a certain Sexton Timofey of St Jacob's Church of Novgorod — who, according to Gippius's linguistic data, kept the annals from 1226 to 1274 (and refers to himself *s.a.* 1230) — wrote official documents (treaties

⁸ See the analysis of readings for the thirteenth century: Timofey V. Guimon, 'Redaktirovanie letopisej v XIII–XV vv.: raznochtenija mezhdru spiskami Novgorodskoj 1 letopisi', *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoj literatury*, 57 (2006), 112–25.

⁹ Aleksey A. Gippius, 'K istorii slozhenija teksta Novgorodskoj pervoj letopisi', *Novgorodskij istoricheskij sbornik*, 6 (1997), 3–72 (pp. 12–19).

¹⁰ Mikhail P. Pogodin, 'Novgorodskie letopisi', *Izvestija po russkomu jazyku i slovesnosti*, 1. 3 (1857), cols 209–33.

¹¹ Aleksey A. Gippius, 'Novgorodskaja vladychnaja letopis' XII–XIV vv. i ee avtory (istorija i struktura teksta v lingvisticheskom osveshchenii). I', in *Lingvisticheskoe istochnikovedenie i istorija russkogo jazyka, 2004–2005*, ed. by Aleksandr M. Moldovan (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2006), pp. 114–251.

between Novgorod and the prince) and copied liturgical books (one of which has a colophon with Timofey's name).¹²

The original manuscript of the archiepiscopal annals did not survive, but we can imagine it as being something similar to the Irish *Annals of Inisfallen*¹³ or the Scottish *Chronicle of Melrose*¹⁴ — a book where scribal hands and inks changed many times. Some sections of this original manuscript could be replaced by new ones. According to Alexey Gippius, this was done twice: in the 1160s with the early section and c. 1199 with the last quire. But the manuscript as a whole was probably never replaced with a new one.¹⁵

Another question — one that Aleksey Shakhmatov asked in 1908 — is how these annals were updated by those archiepiscopal annalists. Were new records added to it immediately after the events happened, or were the annals updated once a year or more seldom without any system?¹⁶ This question cannot be answered with certainty, since the original text of the annals has not survived. Yet there are several ways to tackle this problem: to analyse the distribution of precise dates, chronological shifts, breaches of chronological sequence of events, regularities in the order of the items inside one year, paragraphing in the surviving earliest manuscript (Synodal MS), and so on. The resulting picture seems to be very diverse; the manner of updating annals depended on the personality of an annalist and on particular circumstances. For example, one can observe several groups of annals, each of which was written almost certainly within a short time frame, after a preceding long break in keeping annals.¹⁷ It is important that between 1115 and

¹² Gippius, 'K istorii', pp. 8–12.

¹³ *The Annals of Inisfallen* (MS Rawlinson B 503), ed. by S. MacAirt (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1951). See the facsimile at <<http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=bodleian&manuscript=msrawlb503>>.

¹⁴ *The Chronicle of Melrose from the Cottonian Manuscript*, Faustina B. ix in the British Museum: A Complete and Full-size Facsimile in Collotype, ed. by A. O. Anderson and others (London: Humphries, 1936).

¹⁵ Gippius, 'K istorii', pp. 24–28; and Aleksey A. Gippius, 'K kharakteristike novgorodskogo vladychnogo letopisanija XII–XIV vv.', in *Velikij Novgorod v istorii srednevekovoj Evropy: K 70-letiju V.L. Janina*, ed. by Aleksey A. Gippius and others (Moscow: Russkie slovari, 1999), pp. 345–64.

¹⁶ Aleksey A. Shakhmatov, *Istorija russkogo letopisanija* (St Petersburg: Nauka, 2002), I, 1, 139 (Original edition: *Razyskaniia o drevneishikh russkikh letopisnykh svodakh* (St Petersburg: Tipografija M. A. Aleksandrova, 1908).

¹⁷ See Timofey V. Guimon, 'Kak velas' novgorodskaja pogodnaja letopis' v XII veke?', in *Drevneishie gosudarstva Vostochnoj Evropy*, 2004, ed. by Tatiana N. Jackson (Moscow: Vostochnaja literatura, 2005), pp. 316–52; and Timofey V. Guimon, 'Novgorodskoe letopisanie pervoj chetverti

the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Novgorodian archiepiscopal annalists never used additional sources when updating their annals.¹⁸ This contrasts significantly with the pre-1115 text of the *First Novgorod Chronicle*, which is based on a Kievan source (see below).

The style of the archiepiscopal annals is very businesslike; the annalists do not like to give detailed narrations or express their opinion, as in the following passage:

Въ лето 6635. Заложѣ церковь камяну святого Иоанна Всѣволодѣ Новѣгородѣ, на Петрятинѣ дворѣ, въ имя сына своего. Въ то же лѣто паде метель густъ по земли и по водѣ и по хоромомъ, по 2 нощи, а по 4 дни. Томъ же лѣтѣ обложи трѣпезницу камяну Антонъ игумень Новегородѣ. Томъ же лѣтѣ вода бяше велика въ Волховѣ, а снѣгъ лежа до Яковля дни; а на осень уби морозъ върьшь всю и озимицѣ; и бы голодъ и цересь зиму, рѣжи осминка по полугривнѣ.¹⁹

[In the year 6635 [1127]. Vsevolod founded St John's Church in Petryata's Court in Novgorod, in the name of his son. In the same year dense mayflies fell on the ground, on the water, and on the houses, for two nights and four days. In the same year Abbot Anthony reconstructed the stone refectory in Novgorod. In the same year it was great water in Volkhov, and snow lay until St Jacob's day, and in the autumn the frost destroyed all the grain and the winter crops, and there was a famine during the winter, and the eighth of bread cost half a grivna.]

More detailed descriptions are given for some events, mostly political and military, but the descriptions were not very long in the twelfth century. It is only in the records for the thirteenth century that some more elaborated narratives can be found. For example, more 'literary' are the annals of Archbishop Anthony — which according to Gippius include the entries for 1211–26 — and those of archbishops Spiridon and Dalmat (for 1226–74), written by Sexton Timofey.²⁰ The annals for the early thirteenth century also incorporate such extended narratives as the *Tale of the Capture of Constantinople in 1204* and some others. This

XIII veka: Khronologija i protsess popolnenija letopisi', in *Srednevekovaja Rus'*, ed. by Anton A. Gorskij, vol. VI (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), pp. 80–118.

¹⁸ In the beginning of the thirteenth century, on the contrary, the annals of Novgorod borrowed some material from the annals of Vladimir and some stylistic features from the annals of Kiev. See Guimon, 'Novgorodskoe letopisanie', pp. 101–02; and Aleksey A. Gippius, 'K voprosu o kontaktakh regional'nykh traditsij v russkom letopisanii pervoj tretej XIII v.', in *Vostochnaja Evropa v drevnosti i srednevekov'e: XXI chtenija pamjati chl.-korr. AN SSSR VT. Pashuto: Mat-ly konf.*, ed. by Elena A. Mel'nikova (Moscow: Institut vseobshchej istorii Rossijskoj akademii nauk, 2009), pp. 70–77.

¹⁹ *PSRL*, III, 21.

²⁰ Gippius, 'Novgorodskaja vladychnaja letopis'.

thirteenth-century 'literary expansion' was curtailed in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when the Novgorodian annals returned to a brief, annalistic style.

The Early Section of the First Novgorod Chronicle (up to 1115)

What is the origin of the text of the *First Novgorod Chronicle* up to 1115 (which was continued by the archiepiscopal annals)?

Our oldest surviving manuscript — the Synodal MS — as has already been mentioned, lost its first quires and now starts only with the annal for 1016. The number of the lost quires was sixteen, and this is approximately the same volume of text as is contained in the *Younger Version* up to 1016. Thus, we can assume that the Synodal MS had more or less the same early section as the *Younger Version*.²¹ The two versions differ substantially only for 1039–74: the Synodal MS reflects the earlier text, while the *Younger Version* is secondary.²² Thus, the text of 1115 can be reconstructed from the Synodal MS (from 1016 onward) and from the *Younger Version* (up to 1016).

What was this text? Certainly it was a compilation of at least two sources. Most of its text is Kievan, but it has some substantial differences with the 'classical' *Primary Chronicle* (*Povest' vremennykh let*), which is represented by the Laurentian, Hypatian, and other non-Novgorodian manuscripts. Aleksey Shakhmatov supposed that the *First Novgorod Chronicle* reflects a variant of the *Primary Chronicle* earlier than the 'classical' one. He argued that the *Younger Version* preserved for us the Kievan chronicle of c. 1095, the immediate source of the *Povest' vremennykh let*, which Shakhmatov called *Nachal'nyj svod* ('Initial Compilation').²³ Shakhmatov's hypothesis has been the subject of scholarly discussion: some scholars accept it, while others argue that the Novgorodian *Younger Version* is a secondary text in relation

²¹ Gippius, 'K istorii', p. 59. Even if it was not so (see doubts in Valentin L. Janin, 'K voprosu o roli Sinodal'nogo spiska Novgorodskoj letopisi v russkom letopisanii XV v.', in *Letopisi i khroniki, 1980 g.*, ed. by Boris A. Rybakov (Moscow: Nauka, 1981), pp. 153–81 (pp. 166–67); and Tatiana L. Vilkul, 'Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis' i Nachal'nyj svod', *Palaeoslavica*, 11 (2003), 5–35 (p. 10)), the text of the *Younger Version* up to 1016 was written no later than the 1160s (Gippius, 'K istorii', pp. 34–70).

²² Gippius, 'K istorii', pp. 45–55; and Vilkul, 'Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis', pp. 5–35.

²³ Shakhmatov, *Istorija*, I, 2, 20–31.

to the 'classical' *Primary Chronicle*.²⁴ This is not the place to discuss this debate, but I find the argument of Shakhmatov and his followers more convincing.²⁵ The text up to 1016 in the *Younger Version* has only a few Novgorodian additions, which will be discussed below.

The text for 1017–1115 in the Synodal MS is extremely brief. Its earliest part (scarce notes from 1017 to the 1040s) may represent brief Kievan annals that might have been one of the sources for the *Primary Chronicle*.²⁶ The text from the 1040s onwards consists of short excerpts from the *Primary Chronicle* (probably from the 'Initial Compilation', not from the 'classical' *Povest' vremennykh let*) and of some notes on Novgorodian events.

Some annalistic records were certainly made in Novgorod in the eleventh century, but what they looked like originally is uncertain. The traces of these records can be found in the Synodal MS, the *Younger Version*, and the later compilations. According to Shakhmatov, 'Novgorodian chronicles' of 1017 and 1036 were superseded by a 'Novgorodian compilation of 1050', which united earlier Novgorodian and Kievan materials and which was later updated with new records.²⁷ This interpretation (as well as its modifications by later scholars²⁸) seems to be too complicated, and some of the notes on Novgorodian events of the eleventh century in the *Younger Version* and in the later compilations may not be genuine.²⁹ Shakhmatov also saw traces of early Novgorodian annals in the Kievan *Primary Chronicle*, but this has been convincingly disproved by Dmitry Likhachev.³⁰ It is much more probable that the annalistic writing in eleventh-century Novgorod started as brief, non-systematic historical notes³¹ (maybe in Easter tables), or as additions to a Kievan

²⁴ See Vilkul, 'Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis', pp. 5–35; and Aleksey P. Tolochko, 'Perechityvaja pripisku Sil'vestra 1116 g.', *Ruthenica*, 7 (2008), 154–65.

²⁵ See for example Aleksey A. Gippius, 'Dva nachala nachal'noj letopisi: K istorii kompozitsii Povesti vremennykh let', in *Verenitsa liter: K 60-letiju V.M. Zhivova*, ed. by Aleksandr M. Moldovan (Moscow: Jazyki slavjanskoj kul'tury, 2006), pp. 56–96 (pp. 58–60).

²⁶ Timofey V. Guimon, 'K voprosu o novgorodskom letopisanii XI – nachala XII v.', in *Vostochnaja Evropa*, ed. by Mel'nikova, pp. 63–69 (pp. 65–66).

²⁷ Shakhmatov, *Istorija*, I. 2, 128–82, 275–80, 328–50, and 431–49.

²⁸ See references in Guimon, 'K voprosu', p. 64.

²⁹ Svetlana I. Sivak, 'O derevjannoj Sofii v Novgorode', *Russia mediaevalis*, 7. 1 (1992), 9–15.

³⁰ Dmitrij S. Likhachev, 'Ustnye letopisi v sostave Povesti vremennykh let', in *Istoricheskie zapiski* (Moscow: Nauka, 1945), pp. 201–24.

³¹ Compare Petr P. Tolochko, *Russkie letopisi i letopistsy X–XIII vv.* (St Petersburg: Aleteja, 2003), p. 179.

text, or/and as an extended list of archbishops.³² This complicated question needs further investigation.³³

The *Younger Version*, as it was already said, differs from the Synodal MS for the years 1039–74 and represents a compilation of the text reflected in the Synodal MS, the *Primary Chronicle*, and additional Novgorodian materials. According to Gippius, this compilation should be dated to the 1160s, because in the annal for 1049 of the *Younger Version* an annalist mentions a ‘нынѣ’ (now) built church of St Boris and Gleb, which was in fact founded in 1167.³⁴

Christian Identity in the Early Section: The Kievan Text and the Novgorodian Additions

As it was already said, the *First Novgorod Chronicle* up to 1016 contains the full text of the Kievan *Primary Chronicle* in its very early version. Thus Novgorod did not create its own, alternative account of the early history of Rus’ and its conversion, but used a Kievan text that already contained some information on paganism and the stories about Olga, the first Rus’ martyrs (two Varangians), Volodimer the Great, the conversion itself (which includes the famous *Choice of Religion* and the *Speech of the Philosophers* summarizing the biblical history), and the martyrdom of Boris and Gleb (*s.a.* 1016). Most of these events took place in the south of Rus’, far from Novgorod.

It seems significant that the Novgorodian compiler of 1115 used the Kievan text in full up to 1016, and then started to abbreviate it to very short annals.³⁵ Perhaps he wished to emphasize the early period, the emergence of the state and the dynasty, the conversion of Rus’, and its first martyrs. He regarded the period up to 1016 as a common history of Rus’, and then preferred to reduce his account to a very brief outline of the main events in the south and north of Rus’. Thus, according to the Novgorodian compiler, from 1017 the history of Kiev was no longer the common history of Kiev and Novgorod. It became sufficient for Novgorodians to have only

³² The latter idea was suggested in Mark Kh. Aleshkovskij, ‘K tipologii tekstov “Povesti vremennykh let”’, in *Istochnikovedenie otechestvennoj istorii*, 1975 (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), pp. 133–67 (pp. 158–59).

³³ See preliminary analysis in Guimon, ‘K voprosu’, pp. 63–69.

³⁴ Gippius, ‘K istorii’, pp. 45–58. For another point of view (that these annals were composed in the fifteenth century), see Sivak, ‘O derevjannoj Sofii’; and Vilkul, ‘Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis’.

³⁵ The Kievan *Primary Chronicle* (whatever version used) had an extended text describing events after 1016, and this text had to be available to the Novgorodian compiler.

short notes on Kievan events, and no detailed narratives were borrowed from the text of the *Primary Chronicle*. The notes on eleventh-century Novgorod, though not numerous, stood out well against this background.

There are also some Novgorodian additions to the text up to the year 1016. Firstly, the preface to the annals (for the most part written in Kiev) has a Novgorodian insertion.³⁶ It is promised to describe in the annals, ‘како избра Богъ страну нашу на послѣднѣе время, и грады почаша бывати по мѣстом, прежде Новгородчкая волость и потом Киевская’³⁷ (‘how God chose our country for the last age,’³⁸ and towns started to appear at places, firstly the Novgorodian land, and then the Kievan one’). The Novgorodian compiler declares the seniority of his part of Rus’, which was the country chosen by God ‘for the last age’.

Secondly, an important Novgorodian innovation was the addition of some material immediately after the account of the conversion of Rus’ (in the annal for 988). The annal for 989, which was very brief in the Kievan chronicle, became extended in the Novgorodian one. It starts like this: ‘Крестися Володимиръ и вся земля Руская; и поставиша в Киевѣ митрополита, а Новуграду архиепископа, а по инымъ градомъ епископы и попы и диаконы; и бысть радость всюду’³⁹ (‘Volodimer was baptized along with all the land of Rus’, and a metropolitan was ordained to Kiev and archbishop to Novgorod, and bishops, priests and deacons to other towns, and joy was everywhere’). This phrase is followed by a brief account of the conversion of Novgorod, with an anecdotal story of the wooden idol of Perun. After the idol had been beaten, humiliated, and thrown into the river, a resident of one of the Novgorodian suburbs saw it being washed ashore. He pushed the idol away with a pole and said: ‘ты [...] Перушице, досыти еси пиль и яль, а нынѣ пополови прочь!’⁴⁰ (‘You, Perun, have already eaten and drunk enough, and now — float away!’).

³⁶ There is a theory that this preface was all written in Novgorod in the thirteenth century or even later. I share Shakhmatov’s view (for which Gippius recently suggested a new argument) that the preface is a Kievan text and belongs to the late eleventh century (see Gippius, ‘Dvanachala’, pp. 56–96). Since the Synodal MS has no text up to 1016, the Novgorodian addition can theoretically be dated to any time before the middle of the fifteenth century. Gippius attributes it to the compiler of the 1160s (Gippius, ‘K istorii’, p. 58). It seems to me that the most economical idea is to associate it with the first time the Kievan text was adopted in Novgorod, although Gippius’s dating is possible as well.

³⁷ *PSRL*, III, 103.

³⁸ The wording ‘last age’ certainly has an eschatological sense here.

³⁹ *PSRL*, III, 159.

⁴⁰ *PSRL*, III, 160.

This short account is followed by several lists: the princes of Kiev 'after the holy conversion', the princes of Novgorod (also only 'after the conversion'), metropolitans of Kiev, archbishops of Novgorod, the dioceses of Rus', and the *posadniks* (city officials) of Novgorod. When these additions were made is a difficult question. The lists certainly existed in the 1160s,⁴¹ but at least some of them could have been created already by the compiler of 1115. This can be proved by some peculiarities in the list of *posadniks*.⁴² To the best of my knowledge, this was the first attempt to create such lists in Rus', which perhaps was the first original Novgorodian contribution to the genres of historical writing in Rus'.⁴³

The traces of Novgorodian annals of the eleventh century (after 1017) — which are found in the Synodal MS, the *Younger Version*, and the later compilations mentioned above — do not mention pagans or paganism. They report several times of wars with pagan peoples, but never even use the word 'pagan'. As for Christianity, the surviving fragments of early Novgorodian annals provide scarce and not particularly religious information on the history of the see of Novgorod. For example, from the *Tver' Compilation* (s.a. 1077) one can find out the cause of the death of Archbishop Theodore of Novgorod as 'уядень от своего пса' ('bitten by his own dog').⁴⁴

Only a few notes among these eleventh-century Novgorodian records can be associated with Christianity and Christian identity.⁴⁵ Firstly, there are notes about the fire destroying the wooden St Sophia Cathedral and the construction of the stone church. The note in the Synodal MS is quite short, but it preserves the earliest precise date in Novgorodian annalistic records:

⁴¹ See Gippius, 'K istorii', p. 47.

⁴² Timofey V. Guimon, 'K kharakteristike letopisnogo perechnja novgorodskikh posadnikov', in *Stolichnye i periferijnye goroda Rusi i Rossii v srednie veka i rannee novoe vremja (XI–XVIII vv.): Problemy kul'tury i kul'turnogo nasledija: Dokl. tret'ej nauch. konf. (Murom, 17–20 maja 2000g.)* (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2003), pp. 128–36.

⁴³ Another contribution, though not directly connected with religion, was the introduction of the early laws (*Pravda Russkaja*) into the annal for 1017 (in the *Younger Version*, but not in the Synodal MS). It could have been made either in the 1160s (Gippius, 'K istorii', pp. 60–63) or in the fifteenth century (Oleksiy Tolochko, 'The Short Redaction of *Pravda Russkaia*: A Reconsideration', *Palaeoslavica*, 15 (2007), 1–56).

⁴⁴ PSRL, xv, 173. Other sources report only the fact of Theodore's death in this year.

⁴⁵ I will omit here the Novgorodian annalistic records of the eleventh century found in the later compilations (the *First Sophian Chronicle*, the *Fourth Novgorod Chronicle*, the *Novgorod Karamzin Chronicle*, and the *Tver' Compilation*), for some of these notes could have been written not in the eleventh but in the fifteenth century.

Въ лето 6553. Съгорѣ святая Софія, въ субботу, по заутрънии, въ час 3, мѣсяца марта въ 15. Въ то же лѣто заложена бысть святая Софія Новѣгородѣ Володимиромъ князѣмъ.⁴⁶

[In the year 6553 [1045] St Sophia burned down, on Saturday, after the matins, in the third hour, on 15 March. In that same year St Sophia was founded in Novgorod by Prince Volodimir.]⁴⁷

The information on the foundation of St Sophia Cathedral was important for Novgorod throughout the medieval period, although the records of that event in the *Younger Version* — repeated in the later compilations — differ from the Synodal MS:

В лето 6553. Заложил Володимиръ святую Софью в Новѣгородѣ. [...] В лето 6557. Мѣсяца марта въ 4, въ день суботный, сгорѣ святая Софѣя; бѣаше же честно устроена и украшена, 13 верхы имущи, а ту стояла святая Софѣя конецъ Пискупль улицѣ, идеже нынѣ поставилъ Сотьке церковь камену святого Бориса и Глѣба над Волховомъ.

В лето 6558. Свершена бысть святая Софѣя в Новѣгородѣ, повелѣниемъ князя Ярослава и сына его Володимира и архиепископа Луки.⁴⁸

[In the year 6553 [1045], Volodimir founded St Sophia in Novgorod. [...]]

In the year 6557 [1049], in the month of March on the 4th, on Saturday, St Sophia burned down. It had been constructed and decorated with honour, had thirteen tops, and St Sophia had stood here, in the end of the Bishop Street, where now Sodko built the stone church of St Boris and Gleb above the [river] Volkhov.

In the year 6558 [1050], St Sophia was completed in Novgorod, by the order of Prince Jaroslav, his son Volodimir, and Archbishop Luke.]

The content of these notes in the *Younger Version* indicates that they must have been written some time after the eleventh century. Several scholars have attributed them to a later compiler (whose work they have dated between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries) who wished to highlight this important event and emphasize some details that could be pleasing for a Novgorodian's self-identification.⁴⁹ As suggested by Gippius, this later compiler must have worked in the 1160s.⁵⁰ The

⁴⁶ *PSRL*, III, 16.

⁴⁷ Volodimir (1020–52), son of Jaroslav the Wise, ruled in Novgorod at that time.

⁴⁸ *PSRL*, III, 181.

⁴⁹ Valentin L. Janin, *Očerki kompleksnogo istočnikovedenija: Srednevekovyj Novgorod* (Moscow: Vysshajashkola, 1977), pp. 123–25; Sivak, 'O derevjannoj Sofii'; Gippius, 'K istorii', pp. 57–58; and Vilkul, 'Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis'.

⁵⁰ Gippius, 'K istorii', pp. 45–64.

compiler added Jaroslav the Wise to the list of people who ordered the construction of the cathedral (the Synodal MS mentions only his son Volodimir, so the compiler provided the cathedral with a more prestigious founder) and included the number of ‘tops’ — thirteen — of the wooden church. The number is significant since the stone St Sophia of Kiev had twelve ‘tops’ — one ‘top’ less.⁵¹ Furthermore, he localized the wooden church very precisely, in Bishop Street, which may be due to the origin or another connection of the narrator to that part of Novgorod.⁵² If the compiler of the 1160s was German Voyata,⁵³ the priest of St Jacob’s Church in the same part of the city,⁵⁴ this trace of his local identity in the narrative would have been understandable.

Another important note in the Synodal MS discussing Christian matters deals with the effect on St Sophia Cathedral of a raid on Novgorod by Vseslav, prince of Polotsk, in 1066. A slightly naive record of the Synodal MS describes the damage he inflicted:

Приде Всѣславъ и възъ Новѣгородъ, съ женами и съ дѣтми; и колоколы съима у святѣи Софіе. О, велика бѣда въ часъ тѣи; и понекадила съима.⁵⁵

[Vseslav came and seized Novgorod with wives and children; and he took off the bells of St Sophia. Oh, a great misfortune was in that time! And he took off the chandeliers!]

Three years later, in 1069, Vseslav attacked Novgorod again. This time, according to the Synodal MS, ‘пособи Богъ Глѣбу князю съ новгородци’ (‘God helped Prince Gleb and the Novgorodians’). As in the record of 1045, the annalist dates the victory very precisely and then concludes: ‘А на заутрие обрѣтѣся крѣст честный Володимиръ у святѣи Софіе Новѣгородѣ, при епископѣ Федоре’⁵⁶ (‘And the next day the honourable cross of Volodimir was found at St Sophia in Novgorod, in the time of Bishop Theodore’).

These notes relating to St Sophia, though not numerous and extended, stand out well against the background of brief excerpts from the Kievan chronicle. Perhaps this was due to the intention of the compiler of 1115 to emphasize the major

⁵¹ Sivak, ‘O derevjannoj Sofii’, p. 13.

⁵² Janin, *Očerki*, p. 125.

⁵³ Gippius, ‘K istorii’, pp. 64–68.

⁵⁴ Natalia L. Podvigina, ‘K voprosu o meste sostavlenija Sinodal’nogo spiska Novgorodskoj pervoj letopisi’, *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta*, Ser. 9: Istorija, 1 (1966), 67–75.

⁵⁵ *PSRL*, III, 17.

⁵⁶ *PSRL*, III, 17.

events of the early history of Novgorod, and the erection of St Sophia especially. The latter aspect became even more important for the compiler of the 1160s, who added to the account of the foundation of St Sophia some significant details, pleasing for a Novgorodian.

Christian Identity in the Archiepiscopal Annals of the Twelfth Century

The Novgorodian annals for the twelfth century (from 1115 onwards) survived much better than the earlier annals: the Synodal MS and the *Younger Version* (going back independently to the original of these annals) have preserved the more or less full text of the archiepiscopal annals of Novgorod, which were kept on a yearly basis. As suggested by Gippius, this text was written by five annalists: the annalist of Prince Vsevolod (annals 1115–32),⁵⁷ the one of Archbishop Niphont (1132–56), the one of Bishop⁵⁸ Arcady (1157–63), the one of Archbishop Elias (1164–86), and the one of archbishops Gabriel and Martyr (1187–99).⁵⁹

These twelfth-century annals are brief and businesslike. They contain no sermons or extended commentaries, and even the opinion of the annalist is hardly expressed. The annalists do not instruct the audience (at least explicitly); they just record events. Even biblical quotations are rare in the text.⁶⁰ As mentioned above, the twelfth-century annals of Novgorod were kept year by year, and they were not created all at once with a general concept in mind.

The words 'pagan' or 'paganism' are not used at all in the text. Once and again annalists report military conflicts with the peoples who were in fact pagans, such

⁵⁷ According to Gippius, the first annalist was probably not a secretary of the archbishop but a protégé of Prince Vsevolod (Gippius, 'K istorii', pp. 41–42).

⁵⁸ When the bishops of Novgorod became archbishops is a difficult question. The sources use both terms for those who ruled the see of Novgorod in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Perhaps the title of archbishop was recognized by the metropolitans of Kiev, but not by the patriarchs of Constantinople. See Jaroslav N. Shchapov, *Gosudarstvo i tserkov' v Drevnej Rusi X–XIII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), pp. 34–35 and 62–73. As for Arcady, he is called only 'bishop'.

⁵⁹ Gippius, 'Novgorodskaja vladychnaja letopis'.

⁶⁰ For an attempt to connect many of the entries of the Novgorodian annals with the Bible, see Ulrich Schweier, *Paradigmatische Aspekte der Textstruktur: Textlinguistische Untersuchungen zu der intra- und der intertextuellen funktionalen Belastung von Strukturelementen der frühen ostslavischen Chroniken* (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1995). See also a critical review of this work by Aleksey A. Gippius, 'Biblejskie paradigmy novgorodskoj letopisi', *Russian Linguistics*, 22 (1998), 233–56.

as the Chuds or the Polovtsians, but their religious affiliation is never mentioned: instead, the annalists are preoccupied with military and political outcomes and economic damages. These wars were probably seen as wars against pagans by contemporaries, but no trace of such an attitude is left in the text.

As for Christian matters, they are better represented in the annals. There is a certain quantity of direct references to God, Christianity, Christians, holiness, and so on. Yet they are not as numerous as one could expect: forty-three such references in the *First Novgorod Chronicle* for the twelfth century. More than half of them (twenty-two of forty-three) can be found in the last section of the twelfth-century annals (1188–99), written by the annalist of the archbishops Gabriel and Martyr. They become even more numerous in the records of the thirteenth century. As for the text describing the years before 1187, there are only twenty-one references to matters that can be defined as Christian; that is, around one such reference per four annals.

The references in the annals for the years 1115–99 can be divided into several groups:

- 1) references to misfortunes that took place ‘по грѣхомъ нашимъ’⁶¹ (‘for our sins’);
- 2) references to Divine help or mercy (God’s help to one of the sides in battles;⁶² God’s help in preventing bloodshed between Christians and in concluding peace;⁶³ God’s mercy prevents the destruction of a church struck by lightning;⁶⁴ God’s mercy prevents unrest in the time of a famine⁶⁵);

⁶¹ This is said on the occasion of a famine (*s.a.* 1128 and 1161), an epidemic (1158), a fire (1194), and Archbishop Niphont’s burial in Kiev (the annalist regretted that Niphont was not buried in Novgorod, 1156); *PSRL*, III, 22, 29–31, and 41.

⁶² *S.a.* 1135, 1164, 1169 (twice), and 1195. Once, *s.a.* 1169, it is said that the victory was reached ‘силою крестною и святою Богородицею и молитвами благоувернаго владыки Илие’ (‘because of the power of the Cross, and the Holy Mother of God, and the prayers of the good believer Archbishop Elias’); *PSRL*, III, 24, 31, 33, and 42.

⁶³ *S.a.* 1135, 1180, 1196, and 1198. In 1135: ‘и Божию волею съмиришася’ (‘and reconciled with each other because of God’s will’). In 1180: ‘нѣ Богъ своею милостію боле крови не проля крѣстьянъ стѣи’ (‘but God, by His mercy, did not shed any more Christian blood’); *PSRL*, III, 24, 36, 43, and 44.

⁶⁴ *S.a.* 1187: *PSRL*, III, 38.

⁶⁵ *S.a.* 1188: *PSRL*, III, 39.

- 3) notes that a newly constructed monastery ‘бысть крестьяномъ прибежище’ (‘was a refuge for Christians’) or something similar to that;⁶⁶
- 4) the use of ‘Christian’ words to characterize archbishops of Novgorod;⁶⁷
- 5) the use of the wording ‘рабъ Божи́и’ (‘slave of God’) in two cases;⁶⁸
- 6) a single mention of God in an annalist’s prayer for the peace of a soul,⁶⁹ and three mentions of God in a direct speech quoted in the annals;⁷⁰
- 7) the annalist’s statement that he does not know if those who had been accused of treason and executed were really guilty: ‘творяхуть бо я съвѣтъ държаше на свою братью, а то Богови судити’ (‘they accused them of a treason of their brothers, but God must judge that’);⁷¹
- 8) the annalist’s statement that Archbishop Martyr ‘прия царство небесное и радость неисконьяему въ вѣкы, аминь’ (‘received the kingdom of heaven and the endless joy forever, amen’);⁷²
- 9) a single (!) mention of a miracle. In the latter case, the recovery of their sight by the princes Mstislav and Jaropolk, briefly recorded *s.a.* 1177, concludes with ‘и ту абие съпостиже я Божия благодать и святыя Владычица наша Богородица и святую новоявленую мученику Бориса и Глѣба’⁷³ (‘and here then the grace of God, and our Holy Lady, the Mother of God, and the new holy martyrs Boris and Gleb reached them’). Eclipses and other mysterious

⁶⁶ *S.a.* 1153, 1179, 1192, 1195, and 1198; *s.a.* 1196 it is said that the construction of a church ‘бысть радость крестьяномъ’ (‘was joy for Christians’); *PSRL*, III, 29, 36, 40, 42, and 44.

⁶⁷ Newly elected archbishops are called ‘wise’, ‘God-fearing’, ‘elected by God’, and even ‘saint’ (*s.a.* 1130, 1156, 1193, and 1199: *PSRL*, III, 22, 29, 40, and 44). For example, *s.a.* 1130 Archbishop Niphont was blessed, and the annalist characterizes him as ‘мужа свята и зѣло боящяся Бога’ (‘a saint, very much a God-fearing man’). When some actions of archbishops (for example, the erection of churches) are described, they are defined as ‘well believing’, ‘loving God’, ‘loving Christ’ (*s.a.* 1153, 1169, 1170, 1180, 1191, 1195, and 1198: *PSRL*, III, 29, 33, 36, 39, 41, and 43), and once even ‘saint’ (*s.a.* 1144: *PSRL*, III, 27).

⁶⁸ In both cases the passages are about persons whose deaths are reported: they are the priest German Voyata, who probably was a chronicler (*s.a.* 1188), and Archbishop Martyr (*s.a.* 1199): *PSRL*, III, 39 and 44.

⁶⁹ *S.a.* 1188: *PSRL*, III, 39.

⁷⁰ *S.a.* 1134, 1137, and 1198: *PSRL*, III, 23, 24, and 43–44.

⁷¹ *S.a.* 1194: *PSRL*, III, 41.

⁷² *S.a.* 1196: *PSRL*, III, 42. This passage, according to Gippius, ‘K istorii’, p. 26, is a later interpolation made after Martyr’s death in 1199.

⁷³ *PSRL*, III, 35.

natural phenomena are very often recorded, sometimes with an affective commentary, but they are never explicitly connected to the divine.

In most of these cases we deal with standard formulas and commonplaces, typical of all early Rus' annals, as well as perhaps of any medieval Christian narrative. One should note that all but one reference to Divine help or mercy describe wars between Rus' princes belonging to the same dynasty, not wars against foreigners. The only exception is the victory of the Novgorodians over the Swedes (1164); that is, against Latin Christians. Such references say more about a Novgorodian regional identity than about a Christian identity.

The narrative can also be analysed in regard to the topics reported by the annalists. If the annalists were contemporaneous with the events described, they certainly knew more than they wrote. So what events did they choose to record? The events described by the annalists must have reflected what they regarded as 'theirs' and as 'alien', and what was important enough for them to record and what was not. Let us concentrate here on the ecclesiastical events.⁷⁴

Firstly, the Novgorodian annalists reported changes of ecclesiastical leaders. The changes of Novgorodian archbishops were written down very accurately; this is, of course, not surprising for archiepiscopal annals. The changes of Kievan metropolitans were written down rather seldom, usually in those cases when a metropolitan died soon after the consecration of a Novgorodian archbishop.⁷⁵ It is especially interesting in comparison with the changes of Kievan princes, which were reported by Novgorodian annalists much more systematically for most of the twelfth century. Such an omission of the many changes of metropolitans may reflect claims for the independence of the Church of Novgorod from the Church of Kiev.

As for the abbots of numerous monasteries around Novgorod, the picture is more complicated. The deaths and consecrations of such abbots, including the major Novgorodian monastery of St George, seem to have been recorded without any pattern. Only the changes of abbots at St Anthony's Monastery of the Nativity of Our Lady were written down more or less systematically. This was perhaps due to the personalities of the annalists. At least one annalist is known to have been connected with St Anthony's Monastery: Cyric the Novgorodian, the annalist of

⁷⁴ For a study of the topics interesting for the annalists of Novgorod, see Timofey V. Guimon, 'Novgorodskoe letopisanie XII–XIII vv.: Problema otbora sobytij dlja fiksatsii', in *Obrazy proshlogo i kollektivnaja identichnost' v Evrope do nachala novogo vremeni*, ed. by Lorina P. Repina (Moscow: Krug, 2003), pp. 334–48.

⁷⁵ S.a. 1159, 1166, 1167, 1233, and 1237; see Guimon, 'Novgorodskoe letopisanie', pp. 338–39.

Archbishop Niphont. It is quite possible that some other archiepiscopal annalists of the twelfth century were monks of the same monastery. The only break in recording the changes of the abbots at St Anthony's lies in the period between 1162 and 1187, most of which is linked to the activity of the annalist of Archbishop Elias — German Voyata, who wrote the annals for 1164–86. Voyata was not a monk of St Anthony's, but a priest of St Jacob's Church in another part of Novgorod. Thus, this exception further supports the hypothesis that most of the twelfth-century annalists were affiliated with St Anthony's.⁷⁶ If this assumption is correct, the annalists expressed not only a Novgorodian identity (as archiepiscopal secretaries) but also their local identities, which for all of them but German Voyata were attached to their home monastery.

Another important set of entries is dedicated to the construction of churches, the foundation of monasteries, and similar events. These notes are very numerous throughout the twelfth century. Their structure is quite regular, so that they can even be analysed as charters or other official documents by the methods of formulaic analysis.⁷⁷ This feature probably suggests that the writing down of an act of church building in the annals was a kind of legal acknowledgement of the merits and/or rights of the commissioner. Above all, these notes about the building of churches were involved in the construction of individual and collective Christian identities. The annalists gave to their potential reader information on the impressive abundance of churches and monasteries in Novgorod and its suburbs, and at the same time marked various districts of Novgorod by mentioning churches constructed there.

Annals in Other Novgorodian Religious Houses

Some scholars have argued that the annals were created in Novgorod not only in the archbishop's court and St Sophia Cathedral but also outside of it: in suburban

⁷⁶ See Timofey V. Guimon, 'Atributsija i lokalizatsija letopisnykh tekstov pri pomoshchi formal'nogo analiza tematiki soobshchenij (Anglija i Rus')', in *Vostochnaja Evropa v antičnom i srednevekovom mire: XV vtenija pamjati chl.-corr. AN SSSR V.T. Pashuto*, ed. by Elena A. Melnikova (Moscow: Institut vseobshchej istorii Rossijskoj akademii nauk, 2003), pp. 51–57 (pp. 54–56).

⁷⁷ See Timofey V. Guimon, 'Opyt formuljarnogo analiza letopisnykh izvestij o tserkovnom stroitel'stve (Novgorod, XII – nachalo XIII veka)', in *Ad fontem – U istochnika: Sbornik v chest' Sergeja M. Kashtanova*, ed. by Sigurd O. Schmidt (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), pp. 187–204.

monasteries, parish ('street') churches,⁷⁸ and the princely court.⁷⁹ Yet this argument can hardly be corroborated by textual and historical evidence.⁸⁰ At the same time, in some cases we can be sure that some ecclesiastical communities of Novgorod had annals among their manuscripts. First of all, there is a group of notes (mostly on the construction of churches and changes of abbots) that are present in the Synodal MS only and not found elsewhere. They all belong to the period 1144–95. As suggested by Gippius, these notes were additions made in the copy of the archiepiscopal annals that belonged to the monastery of St George.⁸¹ This was not an ordinary monastery, but (at least from the late twelfth century) the *archimandritia* of Novgorod, the centre of its monastic organization and the second (after the Cathedral of St Sophia) religious house of Novgorod.⁸²

The Synodal MS (our oldest surviving witness to early Rus' annalistic writing) was another copy of the archiepiscopal annals made for the monastery of St George. This copy, first made in the thirteenth century, was updated in the fourteenth century, again from the archiepiscopal annals. Having no recourse (and perhaps no need of any) with which to compile their own annals, the monks of St George still wished to have a copy of the archiepiscopal annals. In 1330–52, they made some additions on the flyleaves, part of which described the events in their own monastery.

Another example concerns the Annunciation Monastery near Novgorod. A copy of the Studite monastic rule was written for this monastery in the late twelfth century. On the last blank leaf of the manuscript, four annalistic notes were written by two hands: about the foundation of the monastery (1170), the construction of the stone church in it (1179), and the deaths of two Novgorodian archbishops who founded the house (1186 and 1193). This small set of notes ends with a prayer for 'домъ сии' ('this house'). These historical notes (at least the ones for 1186 and 1193) were certainly copied from the archiepiscopal annals of Novgorod.⁸³

⁷⁸ This idea is based on the fact that two clerics of St Jacob's Church mentioned themselves in the Synodal MS (Priest German Voyata *s.a.* 1144 and Sexton Timofey *s.a.* 1230). But this is better explained by the hypothesis that both of them updated the archiepiscopal annals while serving as archiepiscopal secretaries; see Gippius, 'K istorii', pp. 8–11.

⁷⁹ For relevant bibliography, see Gippius, 'K kharakteristike', p. 354.

⁸⁰ Gippius, 'K kharakteristike', pp. 354–57.

⁸¹ Gippius, 'K istorii', pp. 21–34.

⁸² Janin, *Ocherki*, pp. 136–49.

⁸³ Lubov' V. Stoljarova, 'Zapisi istoricheskogo soderzhanija na Studijskom ustave kontsa XII v.', in *PSRL*, III, 562–68.

Conclusion

To sum up, medieval Novgorod possessed archiepiscopal annals, which started with the Kievan 'Initial Compilation' (up to 1016, with a few Novgorodian additions) and were continued from 1017 to 1115 with short excerpts from the Kievan chronicle (perhaps the same 'Initial Compilation' and some brief annals) and notes on Novgorodian events. From 1115 onwards the annals were updated year by year. So, this text contained the account of the early history of Rus' (with some elements of universal history), its conversion and related events, the conversion of Novgorod and the foundation of St Sophia of Novgorod, as well as notes on many other events. The existence of these annals allowed Novgorodians, on the one hand, to define the place of Novgorod in the history of Rus' (and through it in universal history) and, on the other, to record contemporary events.

The purposes of the archiepiscopal annals of Novgorod are difficult to ascertain. They were not used for propaganda in a modern sense since manuscript evidence does not indicate their circulation in many copies. Igor Danilevsky has linked the early annalistic writing with eschatological expectations and the need to 'fix' human sins and merits.⁸⁴ Some scholars have suggested that recording deaths (mostly of lay and ecclesiastical rulers) and the construction of churches was intended for liturgical services.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the annals could have been searched for precedents in political interactions between the princes and/or republican officials of Novgorod.⁸⁶ These interpretations do not contradict each other: the annals were probably a kind of minutes of the city-state, kept in Novgorod under the patronage of the archbishops.⁸⁷

At the same time, the very fact of having annals in a certain city or religious house might have been significant for the identity of such an urban or religious

⁸⁴ Igor' N. Danilevskij, *Povest' vremennykh let: Germenevicheskie osnovy izuchenija letopisnykh tekstov* (Moscow: Aspekt, 2004), pp. 232–67.

⁸⁵ See for example Aleksey V. Laushkin, 'Tochnye datirovki v drevnerusskom letopisanii XI–XIII vv.: Zakonomernosti pojavlenija', in *Vostochnaja Evropa v antichnom i srednevekovom mire: XVI chtenija pamjati chl.-corr. AN SSSR V.T. Pashuto*, ed. by Elena A. Melnikova (Moscow: Institut vseobshchej istorii Rossijskoj akademii nauk, 2004), pp. 101–04 (pp. 103–04).

⁸⁶ See for example Mark Kh. Aleshkovskij, *Povest' vremennykh let: Iz istorii sozdanija i redakcionnoj pererabotki: Avtoref. dis.... kand. ist. nauk* (Leningrad: Leningradskij gosudarstvennyj universitet, 1967), p. 19.

⁸⁷ For relevant bibliography and some preliminary ideas, see Timofey V. Guimon, 'Dlja chego pisalis' russkie letopisi?', *Zhurnal FIPP*, 1 (1998), 8–16.

community⁸⁸ and would have given it a place in the Christian world and universal Christian history. The existence of such annals in Novgorod could have been important vis-à-vis Kiev. Thus, though the annals of the archbishops of Novgorod were based on a Kievan source, they had Novgorodian additions and continuations. For the monks of the monastery of St George (the *archimandritia* of Novgorod, the centre of its monastic organization), it was enough to have just a copy of the archiepiscopal annals with a few additions. And for the identity of the community in the Annunciation Monastery (an ordinary house in the suburbs of Novgorod), it was sufficient to add a very short set of annals on the last page of the monastic rule they followed. The influence of such local identities can be seen not only in the copies of the twelfth-century annals of Novgorod written in smaller clerical communities, but also in the text written by archiepiscopal annalists. The annalists affiliated with St Anthony's Monastery systematically wrote down the changes of its abbots and did not do so with the abbots of other Novgorodian houses. Furthermore, in the 1160s the annalist of Archbishop Elias — German Voyata, a priest of St Jacob's Church — emphasized the location of the wooden St Sophia (which pre-existed the stone cathedral) in the same district of Novgorod where his church was situated.

Thus, the hierarchy of the annalistic narrative — Kiev, Novgorod as a whole, the prestigious monastery of St George, and an ordinary suburban monastery — reflected a hierarchy of identities shared by the annalists and their readers: a political identity attached to Rus' and its capital (though less powerful in the twelfth century than in the eleventh), a regional one linked to the Novgorodian land, an institutional one defined by major ecclesiastical institutions of Novgorod, and finally an identity connected to a smaller monastic community or local church.

⁸⁸ Cf. Dmitrij S. Likhachev, *Poetika drevnerusskoj literatury*, 3rd edn (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), p. 65; and Aleksandr G. Bobrov, *Novgorodskie letopisi XV veka* (St Petersburg: Bulanin, 2001), p. 6.

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